

SACRED HISTORY,

IN

FAMILIAR DIALOGUES,

FOR THE

INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS, FROM THE
TIME OF NEHEMIAH TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSA-
LEM BY THE ROMANS UNDER TITUS VESPASIAN,

IN SIXTEEN LETTERS.

BY A LADY.

VOL. III.

Talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Psalms cv. 2.

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou
sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,
when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deut. xi. 19.

— that they should make them known to their children; that the
generations to come might know them, even the children which
should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children;
that they might set their hope in God. Psalms lxxviii. 5—7.

LONDON :

Printed for and sold by T. Gardiner, No. 19, Prince's street, Cav-
endish-square: sold also by T. Chapman, No. 151, Fleet-street;
J. Mathews, Strand; W. Button, and T. Priestley, Paternoster-
row; J. Martin, jun. No. 432, Oxford-street; T. Conder, No. 30,
Bucklersbury, and T. Knott, No. 47, Lombard-street.

1796.

Entered at Stationers' Hall,

5

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

THIRD VOLUME.

HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

INTRODUCTION. - - Page 1—4

Dial.

- I. *An angel sent to Zacharias. The birth of John. The angel Gabriel's salutation to the virgin Mary. The birth of Christ at Bethlehem. Angels sent to proclaim the birth of the Messiah to some shepherds who were watching over their flocks in the field. Simeon and Anna, coming into the temple, acknowledge the child Jesus as the promised Messiah.* - - 5—14

- II. *The offering of the wise men from the east. The slaughter of the children at Bethlehem,*

VOL. III.

A

hem,

Dial.

hem, by order of king Herod. Joseph and Mary are warned of God to flee into Egypt. Joseph is informed by an angel, in a dream, of the death of Herod, and commanded to return with the young child into Judea. Jesus, at twelve years of age, is found with the doctors in the temple, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

15—21

III. John begins his public ministry, being about thirty years of age, preaching repentance, and baptizing in the river Jordan. Our Lord is baptized by John. He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. The call of Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel, to be disciples of Christ. The first miracle wrought by our Lord at a marriage in Cana of Galilee, where he turns water into wine. He drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. John's imprisonment.

22—29

IV. Our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria. The cure of the nobleman's son. The treatment our Lord meets with at

Dial.

at his own city Nazareth; after which he goes to Capernaum. The miraculous draught of fishes. Our Lord calls four of his disciples to be his stated attendants; casts out a devil in the synagogue; and heals Peter's mother-in-law. He makes a progress through the province of Galilee, where he performs many cures; particularly that of healing a leper, by which his fame is spread throughout all the country. 30—39

V. The cure of the man afflicted with the palsy, who was let down from the top of the house. The call of Matthew. The cure of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda. Our Lord teaches the people by the sea-side, and heals their diseases; then retires to a mountain, and continues a whole night in prayer. The twelve apostles chosen out of the disciples. The sermon on the mount delivered. The cure of the centurion's servant. The widow's son restored to life. 40—49

VI. John sends two of his disciples to our Lord, to enquire if he were the promised Messiah. A storm stilled by the word of Jesus. A

Dial.

legion of devils cast out of two men in the country of the Gadarenes. The daughter of Jairus restored to life. Two blind men receive their sight. The twelve apostles sent forth to preach the gospel and work miracles. John Baptist beheaded by order of Herod. - - 50—59

VII. Five thousand persons fed with five loaves and two fishes. Christ walks upon the water; applauds the faith of the Syrophœnician woman, whose daughter he heals; cures a man that was deaf and dumb; and feeds four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes. His rebuke to Peter.

60—69

VIII. The transfiguration of Christ on the mount. His rebuke to James and John for their intemperate zeal against the Samaritans. Ten lepers healed. The seventy disciples chosen. Our Lord's visit to Martha, Mary and Lazarus. A blind man restored to sight. - - 70—80

IX. The Jews attempt to stone Christ. Little children brought to him. The death of Lazarus.

Dial.

Lazarus. His restoration to life by Jesus.

81—87

X. *Our Lord's visit to Bethany. Mary anoints his feet with ointment. His public entry into Jerusalem. He receives the praises of children; drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and teaches the people. At night he returns to Bethany. On the next day, and the day following, he goes up to Jerusalem. The widow's mite applauded. Jesus returns to Bethany. Judas sells his master for thirty pieces of silver.* 88—94

XI. *Two of the apostles, at the command of Jesus, prepare the lamb for the passover, which he celebrates with the twelve at Jerusalem. The Lord's supper instituted. Judas goes to the chief priests. Jesus and the eleven retire to the garden of Gethsemane. Judas arrives and betrays his master with a kiss. Our Lord's examination before Caiaphas. Peter's denial of Christ.* 95—102

XII. *The meeting of the sanhedrim on FRIDAY morning.*

Dial.

morning. They deliver Jesus up to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Judas hangs himself. Pilate, after examining Christ, sends him to Herod, who returns him to Pilate again. Pilate pronounces him innocent, and seeks to release him. The Jews prefer Barabbas a murderer, and clamorously demand the crucifixion of Christ. Pilate condemns him. 103—110

XIII. Christ crucified between two thieves. Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pilate, begs the body of Jesus, and lays it in his own sepulchre. The Jews, remembering that Jesus said he should rise again in three days, desire of Pilate a guard. They secure the tomb, and surround it with soldiers. 111—119

XIV. The resurrection of Christ. The soldiers bribed to say that his disciples stole away the body. Jesus appears to the women who come to the sepulchre. His second appearance to other women. His conversation with two of his disciples as they were walking to Emmaus. He afterwards

Dial.

wards appears to the apostles and others.

120—127

120—127

XV. Our Lord's appearance to the eleven.
 His rebuke to Thomas for his unbelief.
 The miraculous draught of fishes. Jesus
 appoints a meeting for his Galilean and
 other disciples, on a mountain in Galilee.
 His commission to the apostles to preach the
 gospel to all nations. His ascension to glory.

128—134

XVI. Matthias chosen by lot to the office of an
 apostle, in the room of Judas. The de-
 scent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pen-
 tecost. Three thousand converted by Pe-
 ter's sermon. Peter and John cure a lame
 man, who sat at the gate of the temple.
 They are put in prison by the Jews. Their
 defence before the sanhedrim. They are dis-
 charged. The judgment inflicted on Ananias
 and Sapphira, together with other miracles
 wrought at this time, promote the enlarge-
 ment of the church. The twelve apostles,
 being imprisoned by the Jewish rulers, are
 delivered by an angel. They are again ap-
 prehended,

XIX

Dial.

prehended, but, by the advice of Gamaliel,
are releasea. - - 135—144

XVII. *The choice of seven deacons to manage the temporal affairs of the church. The death of Stephen. A violent persecution ensues. The preaching of Philip the deacon. Peter's rebuke to Simon the magician. The treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia baptized by Philip.* - - 145—151

XVIII. *The conversion of Saul, who, from a furious persecutor, becomes an eminent apostle. He goes to Arabia, and returns again to Damascus, preaching the gospel; after which, he goes up to Jerusalem, where he is received by the apostles, but persecuted by the enemies of Christ. He sails for his own city Tarsus in Cilicia. Peter's progress through Judea. At Lydda, he cures a man of the palsy, and, at Joppa, restores Dorcas to life. An angel appears to Cornelius, a Roman captain, ordering him to send for Peter to instruct him. Peter's mind prepared by a vision from heaven. Cornelius and other gentiles receive the gospel, and are baptized.* - - 152—161

Dial.

XIX. *Saul and Barnabas preach at Antioch; at which place the believers were first called Christians. James the apostle slain by Herod Agrippa. Peter, being apprehended and put in prison, is released by an angel. The death of Herod. Saul and Barnabas set apart for preaching the gospel to the gentiles. They begin their ministry in the island of Cyprus, where Sergius Paulus the governor is converted to the faith, and Elymas struck with blindness. Saul, from this time, is called by the name of Paul. He and Barnabas pursue the object of their mission, scattering the seed of the word in different parts, though with much opposition from the unbelieving Jews. A lame man cured by Paul at Lystra. The inhabitants of that city offer divine homage to Paul and Barnabas, which they reject with abhorrence.*

162—171

XX. *A disagreement arising between Paul and Barnabas, they part. Paul takes Silas as his companion; Timothy is afterwards added to them, and they three go through Phrygia and the regions of Galatia.*

Directed

Dial.

(x)

Directed by a vision, Paul goes into Macedonia. He preaches with great success at Philippi. The conversion of Lydia. The devil cast out of a sorcerer; on account of which, Paul and Silas are imprisoned by order of the magistrates. The conversion of the jailor and his house, with the manner of their leaving the prison. Their preaching in other cities, attended with various success. Paul's address to the Athenians. - - - 172—183.

XXI. *Paul goes to Corinth, where he meets with Aquila and Priscilla; Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, with many of the Corinthians are converted. The prudent conduct of Gallio. Paul departs from Corinth and arrives at Ephesus; where he meets with much opposition from Demetrius and the silversmiths, who made shrines for Diana. Departing thence, he travels through part of Europe and the lesser Asia. At Troas he restores Eutychus to life, who, being asleep, fell down from a window, and was taken up dead.* 184—192

XXII. *The continuation of Paul's journey. His address to the elders of Ephesus. His arrival*

Dial.

arrival at Jerusalem; shortly after which, he is apprehended in the temple by the Jews, who are ready to kill him. He is rescued out of their hands by Lyfias the Roman commander. The next day he is brought before the sanhedrim; where the contention in the council nearly costs him his life. Lyfias takes him away by force. Forty Jews bind themselves with an oath to kill Paul. Lyfias, to preserve him, sends him to Felix, the governor of Judea, at Cæsarea, where he continues two years. Festus being appointed in Felix' room, Felix, to please the Jews, leaves Paul bound. Paul appeals to the emperor. His examination before Festus and Agrippa. 193—203

XXIII. Paul's voyage to Rome. He is shipwrecked on the island of Melita. The treatment which he and his companions receive from the natives. Paul heals the father of Publius, the chief man of the island, who lay sick of a fever. He arrives at Rome, where, though a prisoner, he dwells two whole years in his own hired house, preaching the gospel to all, both Jews [and] Gentiles, who are disposed to hear it. 204—212

Dial.

Dial.

XXIV. *Some further account of the apostles from Ecclesiastical History.—Philip—Matthew—James—Matthias—Andrew—Peter—Paul.* 213—222

XXV. *Account of the apostles continued.—Jude—Bartholomew—Thomas—Simon—and John. Concluding observations.* 223—231

SACRED

SACRED HISTORY,

&c. &c.

HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

INTRODUCTION.

WE have now brought the Sacred History down to the re-establishment of the Jews in their own land. The time that elapsed between the last events recorded in the Old Testament, and the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was about four hundred years. The transactions of those times might very properly be introduced in this place ; but, as the Almighty has not

VOL. III.

B

been

been pleased to give us an inspired history of that period, I thought it most proper to place the account of those events in the last volume, together with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final dispersion of the Jews, that it might not interfere with the sacred records.

The facts recorded in the Scripture History have a peculiar claim to our attention; whether we consider their antiquity, their undoubted certainty, the beautiful simplicity with which they are related, or the important instruction they afford: but, most of all, as they are calculated to make us wise unto salvation, by teaching us those great truths, of which, without such information, we must have remained in total ignorance: for, whatever proud philosophers may boast of having discovered by the light of reason, they are all of them bewildered and perplexed in their attempts to account for a variety of things: such as, the nature and perfections of God, the fall of man, and the misery brought into the

the world thereby. Wherever they may seem to cast any light upon these subjects, it will be found, upon a closer inspection, that they derive all their knowledge from that fountain of truth, the Scripture, which they affect to despise.

We are now entering upon an epoch, the most important of any that ever appeared in the annals of history, and from which we think it our honour to date our time. We are come to the birth of Him, after whose name we esteem it our highest privilege to be called, and in the events of whose life and death, it will be our greatest happiness to be interested. The sun in our system is a glorious object, nor could the world subsist without it; but how much more glorious is the Sun of Righteousness arising on the intellectual world; without whom, we must have been left in that horror of darkness, into which the fall of man had plunged us!

Should the infidels of the present day endeavour to blot this sacred epoch from

the records of time, let the facts, by which it is so eminently distinguished, be indelibly engraven on our hearts. With joy and gratitude may we remember, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, condescended to be born into the world, to live a mean and despised life, and to die a painful and ignominious death, for the salvation of sinners. Then shall we account it our greatest honour to profess the religion of Christ, and look with pity and with horror upon those, who reject that worthy name by which we are called.

A Christian is the highest style of man.
 And is there, who the blessed cross wipes off,
 As a foul blot, from his dishonour'd brow ?
 If angels tremble, 'tis at such a fight :
 The wretch they quit, desponding of their charge,
 More struck with grief or wonder, who can tell ?

YOUNG.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE I.

Lucy. **W**E are happy to see you, my dear aunt, after so long an absence, and hope you will renew the subject of our conversations.

Aunt. I shall esteem it a pleasure to gratify you, my dear children. Though the New Testament is a history you are acquainted with, yet we may obtain much profit by collecting the historical facts of the four gospels, and comparing them with the prophecies of the Old Testament, by which it will appear that Christ is the Messiah therein predicted; but as John was his forerunner, we must begin with him.

George. Was John prophesied of?

Aunt. He was; particularly in Malachi iii. 1. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and, chap. iv. 5, 6, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers. We will now see whether the history of John accords with this prophecy. His father Zacharias was a priest of the order of

Aaron, and his mother Elisabeth was also descended from Aaron: they were both very holy persons, walking in the commandments of God; they were advanced in years, and had no child. As Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord.

Maria. Was he not afraid when he saw the angel?

Aunt. He was filled with consternation, which the angel perceiving, said, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard; thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John: thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth, for he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost; and many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God: and he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Zacharias doubted the accomplishment, and said, Whereby shall I know this? And the angel said, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to shew thee these glad tidings.

Maria. Did the angel give him a sign?

Aunt. He did; and one that was a severe rebuke to his unbelief: for he was struck dumb, and remained so till the promise was fulfilled.

George. Were the people in the temple at this time?

Aunt. No; they were without, in the courts of the temple, and wondered at Zacharias staying so long. When he came out, he could not speak to them; but he made motions, whereby they understood he had seen a vision: and when the days of his officiating in the temple were finished, he departed to his own house, where he continued till the birth of John, which took place in the appointed time. And their relations and neighbours rejoiced with them. And they called the child Zacharias after the name of his father; but his mother said, Not so; he shall be called John. And they made signs to his father, to know how he would have him called.

Lucy. Then it seems he could not hear any more than speak.

Aunt. It appears that he was both deaf and dumb: and they brought him a writing-table, and he wrote, His name is John; and his friends were astonished: but, the time of his correction being now expired, he immediately recovered his speech, and used it in praising God, as may be seen in his prophetical hymn recorded in the 1st chapter of Luke.

Lucy. Surely the people must expect great things from a child whose birth had been so wonderful!

Aunt. He was hid for a season, living in the deserts, till the time of his appearing in his public ministry; but, under the protection of God, the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit. The angel
who

who appeared to his mother, was sent, six months afterwards, to a city of Nazareth, to a virgin, who was espoused to Joseph, of the house of David ; her name was Mary. And the angel came to her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured ! the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him she was troubled. And the angel said, Fear not, Mary ; for thou hast found favour with God ; and thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David ; and he shall reign for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, A virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel. *Isaiah vii. 14.*

George. But the angel said it was to be Jesus.

Aunt. The interpretation of the name Immanuel is, God with us, or, Jesus a Saviour. Joseph and Mary were now in Galilee ; and it had been predicted many ages before, that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem, in these words, But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the

the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Micah v. 2.

George. Then this prophecy was not literally fulfilled.

Aunt. Yes ; it was. The Lord took occasion by the pride of a heathen prince, to accomplish his own purposes and predictions. Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, issued an edict, that all the world should be taxed. By this edict all persons were required to resort to the city to which their families belonged ; so it became incumbent on Joseph and Mary, being the lineal descendents of David, to go to Bethlehem for that purpose. This was no contrivance of theirs, but shows how wonderfully the Lord brings his purposes to pass.

Maria. How could they prove themselves of the family of David ?

Aunt. By their genealogies.

George. I remember to have read a number of hard names in the 1st chapter of Matthew, and the 3d of Luke.

Aunt. And in those hard names is traced the genealogy of our Lord, by which it appears that both Joseph and Mary were descended from the family of David.

Lucy.

Lucy. But how astonishing that it should be preserved for such a length of time !

Aunt. And through so many revolutions, which the Jewish nation experienced: we can ascribe it only to divine interposition, that it might be proved that Jesus was the true Messiah. The genealogies of the Jews are now lost. I suppose scarcely a Jew can tell to what tribe he belongs; much less to what family. When Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem, the city was crowded, probably with persons in superior circumstances: and there was no room for them in the inn: no better accommodation could be obtained than a stable; and there Mary brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.

Year of
the World
4000.

In this manner did the Saviour of the world, the Lord of glory, make his first appearance.

Maria. It grieves me to think that the blessed babe Jesus should have a manger for a cradle. As he was Lord of the whole earth, why did he not come in the pomp and grandeur of a great king?

Aunt. He made his appearance in this manner, for very important purposes; yet, though his birth was thus mean, as to its external circumstances, it was marked with a dignity, far surpassing all the vain pomp and empty parade of earthly grandeur. It

was

was proper, for an event so important to the world, to be announced with a peculiar solemnity: and angels were appointed to be the heralds of the new-born Saviour.

Lucy. But they were not sent to kings or princes, but to poor shepherds, who were keeping their flocks by night in the field.

Aunt. You see by this, my dear, whom the Lord esteems the excellent of the earth; not those who are adorned with fine robes, but such as are clothed with humility. To these men the angel of the Lord came, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were afraid. And the angel said, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Isaiah anticipated this event in his prophecy, chap. ix. 6. for, he says, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. The angel then described to them the place and situation in which they should find this glorious new-born prince and Saviour. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest,

est, and on earth peace, good-will towards men. When the angels had sung their Maker's praise, they left the shepherds and returned to heaven.

George. I should think the shepherds must be all astonishment !

Aunt. They certainly were ; but concluded to go immediately to Bethlehem, where they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And they made known abroad the things which were told them concerning the child.

Maria. It must set the people a wondering.

Aunt. It excited astonishment for a time, but appears not to have made any lasting impression on the minds of the people. On the eighth day, they circumcised the child, and called his name JESUS : and, at the end of forty days, Mary went up to the temple, to offer the appointed sacrifices ; Joseph also attended, taking the holy child Jesus to present him to the Lord. There was a man of remarkable piety at Jerusalem, named Simeon, who waited for the coming of the Messiah, as the consolation of Israel : he was moreover endued with the spirit of prophecy (which began to be restored to the Jews, after a suspension of about four hundred years from the time of Malachi) ; by immediate inspiration he was assured, that he should not see death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ or Anointed, the promised Messiah ;
and

and, by the divine guidance, he came into the temple, at the very time when Joseph and Mary were presenting the child Jesus. Thus he witnessed the first accomplishment of that prophecy concerning him, in Hag. ii. 7, 9. And the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Maria. Was there any glorious appearance that filled the house at this time?

Aunt. There could not be a greater display of glory than God manifest in the flesh: the Jews had experienced most wonderful displays of divine goodness, but nothing to equal that of God in our nature. Simeon was so transported at the sight, that he took the child up in his arms, and blessed God, saying, Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and Mary marvelled at the things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them. There was also one Anna, a prophetess, a widow, about eighty-four years of age, who, having no worldly cares to engage her attention, resided close to the temple, and employed her whole time in the

sacred exercises of religion. This devout person, coming in that instant, gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of Jesus to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Lucy. But you have forgotten, aunt, to tell us any thing about the star which appeared.

Aunt. It is natural for you to think so, as the relation in Matthew comes so immediately after the birth of Christ, that, without comparing one part of the scripture with another, one is led to think that it took place while Christ was in the manger; but the things which I have related must have occurred first: we will enter upon it at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE II.

Lucy. **P**RAY, aunt, is it known what part of the east the wise men came from?

Aunt. It cannot be exactly ascertained: some suppose from Arabia, others, from the more distant regions of Mesopotamia or Persia. When they came to Jerusalem they enquired, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Maria. How could they tell, by seeing a star in the east, that a king should be born?

Aunt. Perhaps from Balaam's prophecy, that a star should arise out of Jacob, and a sceptre out of Israel; but, more probably, by some intimation from God himself. Their enquiries were so open, that king Herod, though old, began to be suspicious, when he heard of a king of the Jews: and the king and all Jerusalem were troubled.

George. Why should Jerusalem be troubled at the tidings?

Aunt. Because they had not formed any proper judgment of the blessings to be expected from the Messiah;

Messiah; and they had witnessed so many of Herod's cruelties, upon suspicion of a competitor, that they seem to have feared new scenes of confusion and bloodshed. Herod, however, from the strangeness of the event, supposing the ancient prophecies were about to be fulfilled, convened the priests and scribes, that he might know from them, in what place the promised Messiah should be born: they told him in Bethlehem, according to the prophet Micah. He next conferred with the wise men, that he might know from them, the exact time when the star first appeared, from which he meant to compute the age of his infant rival: having learnt this, he dismissed them with directions to go to Bethlehem, telling them, when they had found the young child, to come and inform him, that he might worship him also.

Lucy. The wise men did not suspect his design of murdering the infant.

Aunt. But though he could deceive man by his subtlety, he could not deceive God, who knew the wickedness of his heart. The wise men pursued their journey till they came to Bethlehem, which was but six or seven miles from Jerusalem. To recompense their pious constancy, the star which they had seen, appeared to them again, and became stationary over the house where Jesus was. And they entered in, and saw the young child, with
Mary

Mary his mother ; and they fell down and worshipped him. And they presented to him gold, frankincense and myrrh ; thus treating him as a king, though they found him in so mean a situation.

Lucy. They paid him more honour than his own people did.

Aunt. He came to his own, but his own received him not, while these gentiles acknowledged him as their Lord and King. Thus was he manifested, not only to Jews but to Gentiles also, though by different modes : the shepherds, acquainted with the true worship of God, had an angel for their guide ; the wise men, contemplating the heavenly bodies, had a star for theirs ; the all-wise God accommodating his revelations to the peculiar circumstances of men's natural geniuses and educations.

George. Did the wise men return to Herod?

Aunt. They did not : for, being warned by God in a dream, they went to their own country another way. And when Herod found they did not return, he issued out an order that all the male children, in Bethlehem and the adjacent villages, which were under two years of age, should be slain. Herod now thought he was sure of his prey ; but God easily found means to defeat his malice, for the angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt,

Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. Thus was fulfilled that prophecy in Hosea xi. 1, Out of Egypt have I called my son. The presents offered by the wise men came very seasonably to provide for them in a foreign country.

George. Did Herod come to the knowledge of Joseph and Mary's flight?

Aunt. He did not: for he sent and slew all the male children. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, chap. xxxi. 15. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not. Rachel, who lay buried betwixt Ramah and Bethlehem, might be poetically represented, on this occasion, as weeping inconsolably for the slaughter of her children: doubtless many of the descendants of Joseph and Benjamin were murdered, as well as those of Judah, in this massacre. It is impossible to describe the horrors of such a brutal scene, and the anguish of the tender mothers over their infants, torn from their arms and butchered before their eyes!

Lucy. This man was a greater monster than Pharaoh!

Aunt. In the history of the Jews which I have promised you, you will have a fuller account of this vile wretch. He did not long survive the slaughter of the

the

the infants. When Herod was dead, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought his life. And they arose and returned into the land of Israel; but Joseph, finding that Archelaus, the son of Herod, had obtained of the Romans, the government of that part of the country in which Bethlehem was situated, and perhaps, learning that he was of a jealous, cruel disposition, feared to settle there; and being farther warned of God, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee, in the northern part of the land, which was governed by Philip, who was of a more pacific and mild temper: and he fixed his residence at Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

And the child Jesus grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him. There is a remarkable circumstance recorded, which took place when he was twelve years of age. His parents went up to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, and, when they returned, Jesus tarried behind. They went a days journey, supposing he was in the company; but, upon their enquiring, and not finding him among their kinsfolk, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the doctors,

doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions : and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when his parents saw him, they were amazed : and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. Jesus said, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?

Maria. I thought Joseph was a carpenter.

Aunt. It is generally understood that he was ; but Jesus meant his heavenly Father : thus teaching us, that the main business of our lives should be to do the will of our Father who is in heaven.

Maria. Did he stay with the doctors ?

Aunt. No ; he returned with his parents, and was subject unto them. What lesson, my dear Lucy, are we taught by this ?

Lucy. That we should be subject to our parents in all things that are not contrary to the word of God.

Aunt. You are right, my dear. Obedience to parents is a duty that rests on the highest authority, and is sanctioned by the noblest example, even that of the Son of God himself. It is supposed that he worked at his father's trade till his public entry on his ministry. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. I shall proceed

proceed no farther to-day, hoping that the part we leave off at may be impressed on your minds, that you may seek to the Lord for that wisdom which cometh from above, that you also may grow in favour both with God and man.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE III.

Aunt. **W**E are now entering upon the public ministry of John, the forerunner of our Lord.

George. How was it that John was brought up in the deserts?

Aunt. It is supposed that his mother fled with him, upon the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem, and that he continued in retirement till he was about thirty years of age; then, being called of God, as a herald, to proclaim the approach of the Messiah, he began preaching in the wilderness of Judea, thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy, chap. xl. 3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God. His raiment was made of camel's hair, and he was girt with a leathern girdle.

Lucy. What strange apparel!

Aunt. This is an instructive lesson to christians in our day. He that was honoured to be the forerunner of Christ was plain and homely in his attire: his mind was occupied with matters of far greater importance than what he should eat, or what he should drink, or wherewithal he should be clothed; for he was chiefly intent

intent upon calling the people to repentance, declaring to them, that the kingdom of God was at hand. And the people came from Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about, flocking to hear him, and were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

Lucy. How long was it before Jesus came to John to be baptized?

Aunt. It is thought to have been several months. And when Jesus came to the river Jordan to be baptized by John, he forbid him.

George. Why did John forbid him?

Aunt. Because he was aware of the dignity of his person. And he said to Jesus, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? Jesus replied, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then John suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Our Lord was, at this time, about thirty years of age; but, previous to his entering on his public ministry, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. After Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights he was hungry: and the

tempter came and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. The devil then took our blessed Lord up into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. The devil then left him, and angels came and ministered unto him : and Jesus returned into Galilee. Some think this was the wilderness of Sinai, where Moses, and afterwards Elijah, fasted forty days and nights, as types of Christ.

George. Why did Jesus suffer himself to be thus tempted?

Aunt. In the epistle to the Hebrews we are particularly

cularly informed of the reasons which induced our Lord to engage in this awful conflict with our common adversary, and of the important purposes which should be answered thereby. We are taught to consider him as our Surety, Head, and Representative; and we are told that in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that, being exposed to the same temptations by which they are assaulted, and the same difficulties which they have to encounter with, he might from experience know how to sympathize with, and succour his people under all their various trials.

Maria. Did John ever see our Lord again?

Aunt. After this, Jesus was walking to the place where John was, who, when he saw him, said unto his disciples, Behold the Lamb of God! Upon this, two of them followed Jesus, and acknowledged him to be the Messiah; they also invited others, to come and see Jesus, of whom Moses and the prophets did write. Thus Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel became disciples; and others quickly joined them.

George. What was the first miracle which Christ performed?

Aunt. Turning water into wine, at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. It appears that wine had been provided, but, from the number of the guests, was all expended: perhaps the presence of Jesus might have in-

duced many to come that were not previously invited. His mother informed him there was no wine.

Lucy. That appears as if Mary expected a miracle.

Aunt. She certainly did: even though Jesus rebuked her, she said unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And Jesus ordered them to fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim. And he said, Draw, and bear it to the governor of the feast. And he tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was; but the servants who drew the water knew. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and shewed forth his glory. This expression is never used of any of the prophets: for it would be the height of arrogance and presumption in any creature, however exalted, to make his own glory the end of his actions; nor were they capable of working any miracle but by the immediate power of God, whose aid they sought, and in whose name they performed it.

Shortly after, our Lord went up to Jerusalem, to the feast of the passover, where he beheld the profanation of the temple: for the rulers had introduced money-changing, and the sale of oxen, sheep, and doves for sacrifices, into the outward court of the Gentiles, which was the place where the proselytes used to worship.

Lucy. They could hardly attend on their devotions

tions amidst the lowing of the oxen, and the bleating of the sheep.

Aunt. True; but these rulers had more concern for their worldly interest than for the souls of men. Our Saviour considered their practice as scandalous and profane, and, though appearing only as a poor man, he spake as one having authority, when he said, Take these things hence; make not my father's house a house of merchandise. And he overthrew the tables of the money-changers; and made a scourge of small cords, and drove out the sheep and oxen.

George. Did the Jews say nothing to our Lord?

Aunt. They required a sign, why he did all this; and he said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Maria. I don't understand our Lord's meaning.

Aunt. Neither did the Jews; for they said, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake, not of the temple which was of man's building, but of his body, of which the temple was a type. Though our Saviour refused to work a miracle at the instigation of the Jews, he wrought many in sight of the multitude, who were come to the feast; for it is said that many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did; among whom was Nicodemus,

demus, a considerable man in the great Sanhedrim, and of the sect of the Pharisees, who came to Jesus privately by night.

Maria. For what purpose?

Aunt. Being convinced of our Lord's divine mission, from the miracles which he wrought, he seems to have been desirous of learning, what the peculiar doctrines were, which he meant to inculcate, as a teacher sent from God. Jesus began by informing him, that except he was born again, or, in other words, had a change of heart, he could not enter into the kingdom of God. But I would have you read the whole account, in the 3d chapter of John. Nicodemus became a faithful, though secret, disciple, as appears from other passages of St. John's gospel. Our Lord left Jerusalem, and went about the provinces of Judea, for the space of seven or eight months, during which time we have no account of his actions; except, in general, we are informed, that he continued to enforce the object of his mission, and succeeded so as to procure more disciples than John his forerunner.

Lucy. Did John continue to preach and baptize?

Aunt. He did; having crossed the river Jordan, and removed to Enon near Salim, a place remarkable for springs of water, where he had great conveniency for baptizing. A dispute which arose be-

tween

tween John's disciples and the Jews, concerning purifying, occasioned them to inform John of the success of Jesus, and that he was followed by all men: upon which, he openly declared Jesus to be the Son of God, and that he himself was only like the morning star, whose glory must decrease as that of the sun increased; that he was of the earth, but Jesus came from heaven and was above all, and that the Father loved the Son, and had given all things into his hand.

The fame of John could not long be concealed from Herod, in whose dominions he was; and it appears from the account given us in the gospels, that Herod attended on his ministry; for, we are told, that he heard John gladly, and did many things. John took this occasion to reprove him for the scandalous vices in which he lived, particularly his having taken Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

George. Would the king bear to hear it?

Aunt. Herod had a veneration for him, knowing him to be a just and upright man, but, by the instigation of his wife Herodias, who, with the fury of a Jezebel, sought all occasions to destroy this holy man, he became daily more averse to him, and, to satisfy her importunities, sent John to prison, where he continued above a year. I shall not detain you any longer at this time.

DIALOGUE IV.

Aunt. ABOUT the time of John's imprisonment, our Lord left the provinces of Judea to go into Galilee. In this journey it was necessary for him to pass through Samaria; that province lying between Judea and Galilee. Having advanced to its interior parts, he came to a city called Sychar, or Sichem, where was a well, called Jacob's well. Jesus, wearied with his journey and the heat of the weather, it being about noon, sat down on the well, and sent his disciples into the city to buy some provision.

George. But if our Lord had gone into the city he might have been accommodated.

Aunt. Our Lord knew the Samaritans were not disposed to receive the Jews into their houses; for the enmity between the two nations was so great, that they generally confined all their intercourse to matters of mere necessity, and mutually refused any actions of friendship or kindness. A woman of Samaria, at this juncture, came to draw water. Jesus asked her to give him some.

Maria. Did she refuse him?

Aunt.

Aunt. No ; but she expressed her surprise, that he, being a Jew, should ask water of her, a Samaritan. To which Jesus made answer, that if she had known the gift of God, and who it was that spake to her, she would have asked of him living water. The woman replied, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep : from whence then hast thou that living water ? Jesus said, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again ; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. This language the woman did not understand ; and she answered as one in amazement, and half disposed to ridicule ! Sir, give me this water, that I thirst no more, neither come hither to draw.

Lucy. Did not our Lord speak figuratively ?

Aunt. Most certainly. Jesus Christ is the gift of God ; and the water that he gives is the Holy Ghost, (John vii. 37—39) which springeth up in the hearts of all believers in holy affections, and will terminate in everlasting felicity. But the woman was still more surprised, when our Lord told her the transactions of her life : and she answered, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet ; our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say, that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. (The Samaritans had

had built a temple in opposition to the temple at Jerusalem, which I shall give you a more full account of at a future period.) Jesus said unto her, Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews: but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Here, my dear children, our Lord explains what true worship is: it consists not in modes and forms, or being of this or that party: whatever mode you use, if your hearts are not engaged, you have only the form of godliness, but are entirely destitute of the power: for our Lord has expressly said, Ye must worship God in spirit and in truth. The woman replied, I know that Messias cometh, who is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And she left her water-pot, and went into the city.

Maria. I wonder she should run away immediately.

Aunt. Her heart was so full of admiration and surprise, that she ran to communicate the joyful tidings to the people of the city, saying, Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

George. I suppose they followed the woman to see Jesus out of curiosity.

Aunt.

Aunt. Most likely many did: but some of the Samaritans believed that Jesus was the Messiah, from what the woman told them concerning him: and when they were come, and heard his words; notwithstanding their rooted prejudices against the Jews, they besought him to tarry with them; and he abode there two days. And many more believed, and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

After this, our Lord returned into Galilee, and came again to Cana, where he had performed the miracle of turning water into wine. And there came a certain nobleman, supposed by some to be Chuza, Herod's steward, whose son was sick at Capernaum; and he besought Jesus, that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Jesus said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe: most likely referring to the Samaritans, who had believed his word without any miraculous confirmation. The nobleman entreated Christ to come down before his child died. Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And he believed the word which the Lord had spoken, and went his way.

Lucy. Did not this imply strong faith in Christ?
for

for he could have no demonstration that his son was healed.

Aunt. Undoubtedly it did. His servants came to meet him, with the welcome intelligence that his son was recovered. Upon enquiring, he found that the fever left him, the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, 'Thy son liveth;' in consequence of which, this nobleman and all his family believed in Christ.

Our Lord, in his progress, came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: he entered into the synagogue, according to his usual custom, and the prophecy of Isaiah was delivered to him; when he read these words, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord,' Isa. lxi. 1, 2. And he closed the book.

George. Did our Lord apply it to himself?

Aunt. He did: but they were not disposed to receive him. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, was proceeding to shew that a prophet must not expect any honour in his own country. But they were so exasperated at his discourse, that they rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of a hill, that they might cast him down headlong.

Maria,

Maria. Oh, what a wicked people ! How did our Lord escape ?

Aunt. He passed through the midst of them, as it should seem, in a miraculous manner, and went to Capernaum, which he made the chief place of his residence; thus remarkably accomplishing Isaiah's prophecy : The land of Zebulun, the land of Naphthali, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles : the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region of the shadow of death is light sprung up. *Is. ix. 1, 2.*

Capernaum was the metropolis, or chief city, of Galilee, situated upon the lake of Gennesareth, or the sea of Galilee, called also the sea of Tiberias. This lake was about twelve miles in length, and five in breadth, abounding with all kinds of fish, and surrounded with several cities and towns, which stood on its banks : on the east side were Chorazin, Bethsaida, Julias and Hippos; on the west, stood Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarichea, beside other places of inferior note. As our Lord was walking by the lake, he saw two fishing vessels; one belonging to Peter and Andrew, the other to James and John, who, after a most tedious and unsuccessful night, were gone on shore to wash and dry their nets. Our Saviour, being pressed by the multitude, that came out of Capernaum, stepped into Peter's vessel, desiring him to put a little from the
 1 shore,

shore, where he preached to the people. And when he had done speaking, he said to Peter, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. Peter expressed some reluctance, having met with so little success : nevertheless, at the word of the Lord, he let down his net, and inclosed such a multitude of fishes, that the net brake ; upon which, they called their partners to help them : and they filled both the vessels, so that they began to sink.

George. This must greatly astonish them.

Aunt. It did ; especially Peter, who fell down at Jesus' feet, praying him to depart from him, for he was a sinful man. The Lord, to calm his mind, bid him not fear ; giving him to understand that he had nobler employment for him ; for, from that time, he and his brother Andrew should catch the souls of men : he likewise gave the same call to James and John, who, with their father, were mending their nets in the other vessel. These four left all, and followed Jesus.

Lucy. Did not Peter and Andrew live at Bethsaida ? and were they not called at that place ?

Aunt. Their first call was at that place, about a year before, during which period they seem to have followed their own occupations, and to have removed to this city for the advantage of trade ; but from this

this time they became constant and inseparable disciples of our Lord. On the sabbath-day, our Saviour entered into the synagogue and taught. A man who was present, being possessed with an impure spirit, cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

Lucy. How this declaration must astonish the Jews!

Aunt. Especially when Jesus rebuked the devil, commanding him to hold his peace, and come out of the man. And when the devil had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him. There were frequent instances of persons being possessed among the Jews at this time; but the cure of them being so far beyond the reach of human ability, the spectators were seized with the greater surprise, that Jesus, by his word, should have authority and power over unclean spirits. Upon this, his fame was spread throughout Galilee, and its neighbouring parts.

When our Lord came out of the synagogue, he went into the house of Simon Peter, whose wife's mother was ill with a violent fever. Jesus, being informed of it, went to her bed-side, and rebuked the fever. She was immediately restored to perfect health,

health, and arose and waited on the company. This, together with the other miracle, caused the people from all parts to bring their sick, diseased, and possessed, begging relief of this heavenly physician; and he healed them; thus accomplishing Isaiah's prophecy, which says, He took our infirmities upon himself, and bore our diseases. Early in the morning our Lord retired to a private place, whither his disciples followed him; the people finding out his intention of departing, came to him, and besought him to continue at Capernaum.

Maria. Did our Lord comply with their request?

Aunt. He told them that he must preach the kingdom of heaven in other cities also. He then made a progress throughout Galilee, preaching the gospel in the synagogues, and curing all manner of diseases; the evangelists mention demoniacs, lunatics, and paralytics: but the principal cure performed by our Lord in this journey appears to have been that of healing a leper, which not only caused his fame to be spread throughout Galilee, but engaged numbers to follow him out of other parts, as Decapolis, Judea, Jerusalem, and the country beyond Jordan.

Lucy. Was there any thing very extraordinary in this case?

Aunt. There is one circumstance particularly deserving

serving our notice, and that is, our Lord's injunction to the leper, to go and shew himself to the priest, and offer for his cleansing, as Moses commanded. Thus did our Saviour shew his regard to the law of Moses, while yet in force; though frequently charged by his enemies with the violation of it: but his principal design appears to have been, to make the priests themselves, by virtue of their office, attest the truth of this miracle, the fame of which had spread all over the country: thus manifesting his divine mission to his most inveterate enemies, and leaving them without excuse: for it seems to have been generally understood, that nothing less than the exertion of a divine power could be sufficient to cure a confirmed leprosy. (See 2 Kings v. 7.) The nature of this disorder, being such that it could not be concealed, would make the cure the more conspicuous. But we must conclude for to-day.

DIALOGUE V.

Aunt. OUR Lord, after continuing about three months in Galilee, entered privately into Capernaum, and probably into Peter's house.

Lucy. I should imagine he could not be long retired.

Aunt. His return was soon known, when multitudes flocked to hear his discourses, so that the house was filled; and, among the rest, were some Pharisees and Doctors of the law from Jerusalem and Judea.

Maria. With what intention did they come?

Aunt. Rigidly to examine the discourses and miracles of our Lord. While he was preaching, a man who had lost the use of his limbs by the palsy, was brought in a bed carried by four men, who, not being able to get in for the throng, took him up to the house-top, and, taking off part of the tiling, let him through the roof.

Maria. How surprised the people must be to see the man coming down in the midst of them!

Aunt. No doubt but it excited their attention. And Jesus, when he saw their faith, said unto the man,

man, Thy sins are forgiven thee. The scribes and pharisees began to reason, saying, Who can forgive sins but God alone? Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said unto them, Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk? But, that ye may know that the son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy couch, and go to thine house. The man did as our Lord bade him, and departed to his own house. And they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

Our Lord removed from thence to the sea-side, for the convenience of the people, whither multitudes followed him, whom he instructed. As he was passing along, he saw a publican, or collector of the public taxes, named Levi, or Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, it being his business to receive the duties on all commodities that came by the sea of Galilee. The various extortions usually practised by persons of this profession, rendered the employment itself odious to the Jews, especially when followed by any of their own nation; so that the very name by which they were distinguished became a term of reproach, and those who valued their reputation would consider it a disgrace to associate with them.

Our Lord

Our Lord addressed Matthew, according to his usual mode of calling his disciples, saying, Follow me. A divine power accompanied the word to his heart, which determined him at once to renounce his gainful occupation, and become a constant disciple of Jesus. Impressed with gratitude for the favour so unexpectedly conferred on him, Matthew made a great feast at his house, to which he invited Jesus and his disciples ; and there was a great company of publicans and others, who sat down with them. The pharisees, observing this, were extremely disgusted, and said to the disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners ? The answer which our Lord returned is full of instruction, as it serves not only to vindicate the propriety of his conduct, but also to shew the end and design of his coming into the world. They that are whole, said he, have no need of a physician, but they that are sick : I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The passover approaching, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. This appears to have been the second which he attended, after entering on his public ministry. In the south-east part of the city was a pool, called Bethesda, having five porches, in which lay a number of diseased persons, as blind, lame, withered, &c. waiting for the moving of the waters.

George.

George. Could they tell the exact time when they would be moved?

Aunt. No. They waited for an angel, who at certain seasons came and troubled the waters; and the first that stepped in was cured. On the sabbath our Lord repaired to this hospital, and a certain man was there, who was bowed down with infirmity. Jesus said unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? He replied, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but, while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Lucy. How long had he been in that condition?

Aunt. Thirty-eight years. This man is an example for us to wait at the house of mercy, (for that is the signification of the term Bethesda,) or where God peculiarly displays his mercy, under the faithful preaching of his word: and though others should get the start, yet there is encouragement to wait; for, by waiting, this man found a cure: and it is said, They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. The time of waiting is not fixed. Then let us wait unweariedly, as the man did, who at length received the blessing. For Jesus said unto him, Arise, take up thy bed and walk; which the man immediately did. This would be the more noticed, as it was on the sabbath-day, when no burdens were allowed to be carried.

Maria.

Maria. I think the Jews reproved the man for doing so.

Aunt. But the man replied, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. Then they interrogated him, concerning the person, who had commanded him so to do; but he could not give them any information; for Jesus had withdrawn himself, a multitude being in that place. Soon after, probably on the same day, Jesus met the man in the temple, whither we should hope he had repaired to render thanks for his unexpected cure. Jesus said unto him, Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee. And the man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole. Probably he expected they would honour his benefactor; but, on the contrary, they persecuted him as a sabbath-breaker.

Lucy. Then, in fact, they sought his life; for a sabbath-breaker was to be stoned to death.

Aunt. They sought continually to slay him. In the 5th chapter of John, you may read our Lord's defence, where he asserts his personal and mediatorial dignity and authority; appealing to the testimony of John, to that of God by his miracles, and to that of the scriptures concerning him, and concludes with saying, Had ye believed Moses, ye would have be-

lieved me; for he wrote of me: but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Maria. What answer could they make to this?

Aunt. It does not appear that they made any; his persecutors being so overawed, that they proceeded no farther against him. After this, our Lord withdrew with his disciples to the sea-side, whither multitudes followed; whilst he, standing in a small vessel, instructed them, healing the diseased, and dispossessing all the impure spirits, who, falling down before him, proclaimed him to be the Son of God.

About this time our Lord thought proper to make a public election of some persons above the rest, to whom he would more fully communicate the mysteries of his kingdom; and who, by a constant attendance on his ministry, and being witnesses of his sufferings, resurrection, and ascension, were to be qualified, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel to all nations. Previous to this, we are told, our Lord withdrew himself to a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer.

Lucy. What need had Jesus to pray, as he was God?

Aunt. He was now, my dear, in a state of humiliation and debasement, into which he had voluntarily entered,

entered, in order to accomplish the salvation of his people. Though truly God he took upon him the form of a servant, and, having assumed a character that implied subjection and dependence, it became him, in that relation, to set a perfect example of trust and confidence in God, and of devotion to his will. When we consider the essential glories of his nature as God, we cannot sufficiently admire his grace and condescension in thus humbling himself for our sakes. Behold the Governor of the Universe, the Lord of all Worlds, as a suppliant, at the footstool of the divine throne, on his bended knees, intreating for blessings to be poured upon our guilty heads ! The solemn transactions which were about to take place, were to be the means of diffusing the light of the gospel to all the world : and our Lord's example on this occasion, is designed to teach us, never to set about any important business without first committing it to God by prayer, Prov. iii. 5, 6. The next morning our Lord made choice of twelve persons from among his disciples, according to the number of the patriarchs and tribes of Israel, whom he called by the name of apostles.

Maria. What is the meaning of that name ?

Aunt. A special messenger, or ambassador : an office of the highest dignity and importance that could

could be conferred on man. The persons chosen were, Simon, who is also called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew (who is supposed to be the same with Nathaniel), Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, who was the traitor.

Our Lord, having chosen his apostles, came down into the plain, where a vast throng was assembled, from Judea, Jerusalem, and the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, bringing their sick and possessed; and they sought to touch him; for there went virtue out of him and healed them all. Our Lord, for the convenience of the people's hearing, went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; and there he delivered that celebrated discourse, generally called, The sermon on the mount. Our Lord began with pronouncing blessings on those whom the world despised, even such as are humble and poor in spirit: next he proceeded to condemn the wretched glosses and interpretations which the Jews had put on the moral law; shewing the extent of its precepts, and the true sense in which they are to be understood: he then explained and enforced the duty of giving alms and praying; he next cautioned his disciples to take heed and beware

of

of covetousness, and gave several other precepts and instructions, concluding with an earnest persuasive to listen to what he had been saying. But, before our next meeting I would have you read the whole sermon: you will find it in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew. Our Lord then returned to his own city Capernaum.

Lucy. I am astonished that the Jews should maintain such an inveterate hatred to our blessed Lord, when he went about continually doing good.

Aunt. The Gentiles, on various occasions, expressed more faith in Christ than the Jews. His fame having spread, a Roman officer, called a centurion, which signifies one that has the command of a hundred men, came to intreat him to heal his servant, who was at home sick with the palsy: and Jesus said, I will come and heal him. But the centurion answered, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. Jesus, hearing this, said to them that followed, Verily I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel; adding, That many should come from the farthest parts of the world, to sit down in the kingdom of heaven, while the Jews, the children of the kingdom, should be excluded. This extraordinary faith Jesus rewarded with a cure, telling the centurion to go his way;
for

for as he had believed so should it be done. And his servant was healed the same hour.

Maria. When I am sick, I shall be ready to wish I had lived when our Lord was on earth.

Aunt. And do you think, my dear, that the Lord has less sympathy for us now he is in heaven? or, that his power is diminished by his exaltation to glory? Surely not. We have the fullest encouragement at all times to present our supplications, and make known our distresses to him, and may rest assured that the afflictions we labour under, shall either be removed, or be made the means of good to our souls.

The next day, Jesus departed with his disciples from Capernaum, and entered Nain, a city of Galilee, not far from Nazareth, where he met a funeral procession. The sight of the poor afflicted widow, mourning the loss of her beloved and only son, moved the compassion of our Lord, who bade her not to weep, and commanded those who bore the corpse to stand still. He then said, Young man, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak, and was delivered to his mother. This was so wonderful, that the people glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited his people.

DIALOGUE VI.

Lucy. **W**E have been prevented for some days from attending; but, indeed, my dear aunt, it was not from choice but necessity.

Aunt. It has given me great pleasure, my dear children, to observe the attention you have paid to the subject of our conversations; and I hope, through the blessing of God, it will prove of lasting advantage to you. But we will go on with our history.

John, when he had been about five months in prison, hearing that the fame of Jesus daily increased, sent two of his disciples to our Lord, to enquire if he was the Messiah, or whether they were to look for another?

Lucy. I thought John had full testimony of that at our Lord's baptism, and that he had also declared him to be the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

Aunt. I should rather think John took this method for the full confirmation of the faith of his disciples.

George.

George. Did our Lord give them a direct answer?

Aunt. No. He appealed to his works as a proof of his divine mission; for, he wrought miracles in their sight, and then bid them go and inform their master what they had seen. After the departure of these messengers, our Lord continued his discourse to the multitude concerning John, which you will find in Matt. xi. 7—15.

Our Lord went through the cities and villages of Galilee, preaching the joyful tidings of the kingdom of God, being accompanied by his apostles, and some pious women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, with many others, who ministered to him of their substance.

Shortly after, we find our Lord in a vessel by the sea shore, whence he taught the multitudes, as they stood on the land. On this occasion, as well as on many others, he adopted a mode of instruction very usual among the Jews, which was that of parables, or obscure similitudes.

Maria. What was the reason that he spake to them in parables?

Aunt. The same question was put to our Lord by his disciples, when the multitude was withdrawn, to which he answered, That it was given to them to

know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it was not given. He then explained to his disciples the parable of the sower, which you may read, with many other parables, in the 13th chapter of Matthew. Our Lord, leaving Capernaum, resolved to cross the lake, or sea of Galilee, and ordered his disciples to prepare a vessel. When he was ready to take shipping, a certain scribe came to him, declaring that he was willing to follow him whithersoever he went.

George. That was a good resolution.

Aunt. It would have been so, if his motives had been good; but Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, knowing that his principal object was to advance his temporal interests, told him plainly, that if he were one of his constant followers, he must be content to live in a destitute condition; for though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of Man had not where to lay his head.

In the evening, Jesus embarked: as they sailed, he fell asleep; and there arose a storm, so violent and tempestuous, that the ship was near being overwhelmed with the waves. The disciples, in consternation, awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish! Then Jesus arose, and, by his word, rebuked the wind and the sea; and there was a great calm. Thus he proved himself to be the sovereign Lord of
universal

universal nature, of whom it is said, Psalm lxxxix. 9, Thou rulest the raging of the sea ; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

Lucy. How they must feel after such a sudden transition ! one moment expecting to sink in the deep ; the next, to experience a perfect calm !

Aunt. They were filled with astonishment, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ! Our Lord, the next morning, landed on the east side of the lake, in Philip's dominions, in the country of the Gadarenes. Our blessed Saviour's visit here, appears to have been to rescue two poor forlorn objects, whose dwelling was among the tombs.

Maria. Why did they choose so gloomy a place for their residence ?

Aunt. Because they could not rest any where ; no chains or fetters could confine them ; they were so furious as to become the terror of travellers. And when they saw Jesus, they cried out, and fell down at his feet, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high ? we beseech thee, torment us not before the time. Our Lord asked the most furious, what his name was, who answered, Legion, because such a multitude of devils had possessed him. These infernal spirits implored our Lord, if he cast them out of the possessed person,

not to send them into the abyſs, but to permit them to enter into the herd of ſwine, feeding on the mountains.

Lucy. What could be the intention of the devils in this request?

Aunt. I have thought that their deſign was, that the Gadarenes might be prejudiced againſt our Lord for deſtroying their cattle; but the Governor of the world knows how to overrule all machinations againſt him. Jeſus readily permitted them to enter into the ſwine; doubtleſs, to ſhew his own authority, and the greatneſs of the deliverance, and perhaps to puniſh the owners for their contempt of the law, in keeping animals which they were forbidden to eat.

George. What effect had it on the ſwine?

Aunt. The whole herd ran furioſly down, and caſt themſelves headlong into the lake, by which about two thouſand periſhed. The keepers of the ſwine fled, and reported in the city the ſtrange things they had ſeen. The city Gadara was inhabited by Jews, Greeks, and Syrians, multitudes of whom flocke'd to ſee this wonderful ſight. When they beheld the man clothed, and in his right mind, ſitting at the feet of Jeſus, they were afraid, and beſought our Lord to depart from them. The man begged of Jeſus to permit him to go with him; but he ordered him

him to return to his own house and friends, and shew what great things the Lord had done for him. In most cases our Lord enjoined silence on them who had received a cure, but this man had a commission to publish it, which he did throughout the whole city.

Our Lord then crossed the lake, and returned to Capernaum, where the people received him gladly, for they were all waiting for him. And there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and he fell down at the feet of Jesus, beseeching him to go with him, and heal his little daughter, who was at the point of death; to this our compassionate Lord acceded, and the people followed him. As they were going along, a messenger met him from the ruler's house, who said unto his master, Thy daughter is dead. When Jesus heard this, he said unto the ruler, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, except Peter, James and John. When they came to the house, he took the father and mother of the child, and them that were with him, and went in where the child was lying. And he took her by the hand, and said, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise. And she arose, and walked.

Maria. How old was she?

Aunt. About twelve years of age. Her parents received their restored child with astonishment and

joy. When our Lord quitted the house of the ruler, two blind men followed him, crying, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us. It appears our Lord did not particularly notice them, but went into a house.

Maria. Did they go away sorrowing?

Aunt. No: they followed Jesus into the house; upon which he enquired of them, if they believed he was able to do this thing for them. They answered, Yea, Lord. Then Jesus touched their eyes, and said, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened. Though Jesus had commanded them to be silent, yet their hearts were so full, that they went and spread it abroad. No sooner were they gone than a dumb man, possessed with a devil, was brought. And Jesus cast out the devil, and the dumb spake; at which the multitude marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Lucy. Did our Lord ever visit his own city Nazareth again?

Aunt. Though it was but a year since they sought his life, compassion led him once more to preach the gospel amongst them; and, on the sabbath day, he entered into their synagogues and taught the people, who were all astonished at his abilities; but their pride prevented them from receiving any benefit, for they despised him on account of the meanness of his birth,

birth, and the poverty of his relations. Jesus told them that a prophet was not without honour, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

Maria. Did our Lord perform any miracles among them?

Aunt. He only cured a few sick persons, being astonished at their unbelief, and left them. This concluded the second year of our Saviour's public ministry; after which he entered the province of Galilee, preaching in the cities and villages. Our Lord then thought fit to send his twelve apostles forth, two and two, to preach the gospel, and work miracles, giving them suitable instructions.

George. To what part did they go?

Aunt. To all the parts of Palestine, or the holy land, inhabited by Jews, whom their master called the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Our Lord still continued to preach in Galilee. A few weeks after, king Herod made a splendid entertainment for the nobility on his birth day, in the very castle where John was prisoner. The king was so pleased with the dancing of a young lady, daughter of his illegal wife Herodias, as to promise to grant her any thing she asked, even to the half of his kingdom, confirming it with an oath.

George.

George. She had it in her power to be the richest lady in the kingdom.

Aunt. But she consulted with her mother, whose malice and revenge overcame every other consideration, and, horrid to relate ! she requested the head of John Baptist to be brought in a charger.

Maria. And could this young lady ask for it ?

Aunt. Yes, she was unfeeling enough to make this request before the whole company.

George. But what said the king ?

Aunt. The king never expected such a demand, and was exceedingly sorry : but, recovering himself, out of a pretended respect for his oath and the nobility present, he sent, and caused John to be beheaded ; and the executioner brought the head of this holy man, and presented it to the young lady.

Maria. Surely she turned away with horror !

Aunt. No ; she took it herself, and delivered it to her mother.

Lucy. I hope, aunt, she was the first lady, and will be the last, that ever will be the bearer of such a dish.

Aunt. I do not recollect a similar instance, either in sacred or profane history ; but it shews us, my dear children, the awful depravity of the human heart. When John's disciples heard of the fate of their worthy teacher, they came to pay the last respect

spect to his memory, and were allowed to take his body, and bury it.

Maria. I should think the king could never be happy afterwards.

Aunt. There is no peace to the wicked. Some time after this, Herod, hearing of the fame of Jesus, his wicked conscience suggested that it was John, whom he had beheaded, risen from the dead; and most likely he thought that he would avenge his blood. Thus are the wicked constantly tormented with fears and perplexities.

Lucy. Pray, aunt, don't look at your watch; this is but a gloomy subject to leave off with.

Aunt. But it may sometimes be profitable to reflect on these things. Put this question to yourselves, Who hath made me to differ? Go over the story again with this in view, and then, I hope, your hearts will be filled with thankfulness to God for his goodness to you. Compare your education, and the examples set before you, with those of that lady; and then adore God for his goodness in placing you out of the reach of such temptations.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE VII.

Aunt. OUR Lord, hearing of the murder of John, from his disciples who buried him, and knowing the subtilty and cruelty of Herod, ordered his disciples to prepare a vessel, and cross the sea of Galilee with him, that they might retire into a desert near Bethsaida.

George. Were the apostles returned from their several journies?

Aunt. They were, and accompanied our Lord, who, seeing the people follow in great multitudes, went on shore with his apostles, teaching the people, and healing their sick. The disciples intreated our Lord to send them away, that they might get some food before night.

Maria. This was a very seasonable request.

Aunt. Our Lord seemed to approve of the hint, but said, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. The disciples answered, We have but five loaves and two fishes.

Lucy. I suppose they had provided this for themselves.

Aunt.

Aunt. Your conjecture may be right: in that case, the Lord tried their love to their fellow-creatures, and their faith in him for a fresh supply. And Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; he then took the loaves and the fishes, and, looking up to heaven, blessed them, and brake, and gave them to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude: and they did all eat and were filled. Our Lord then ordered the fragments to be gathered up, and they filled twelve baskets.

Maria. They lost nothing by freely giving to the poor.

Aunt. I never knew any that did; for he that scattereth (to the necessities of his fellow creatures) shall increase. But we are likewise taught another useful lesson, by our Lord's command, respecting the fragments; that the most ample fortune will afford no excuse for extravagance or waste; on the contrary, frugality must be considered as a duty, incumbent on those who are blessed with the greatest affluence; since He who is the Sovereign Lord of Universal Nature, and possessed of inexhaustible resources, was yet pleased to say to his disciples, Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost.

George. How many persons were thus fed?

Aunt. Five thousand men, besides women and children. The people were so astonished at the miracle,

racle, that they said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. And Jesus, perceiving that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, immediately constrained his disciples (who probably would have been too ready to join the people in it) to take shipping, and go before him to the other side of the lake, whilst he himself dismissed the multitudes ; after which, he retired to a mountain to pray, where he continued till midnight. During this time, the disciples met with a contrary wind, and the ship was tossed with the waves.

Lucy. They must wish for their Lord and Master to be with them, having, by experience, known him to be able to quell the raging of the sea.

Aunt. Their distress could not be hidden from their divine Master, who, by his omniscience, as God, saw their difficulties, and, in the fourth watch of the night, came to them, walking on the waves as on solid ground.

Lucy. What is meant by the fourth watch of the night ?

Aunt. The ancients divided the night into four watches ; the first beginning at six o'clock in the evening, the second at nine, the third at twelve, and the fourth at three o'clock in the morning. The disciples when they saw Jesus were afraid, supposing

posing they had seen a spirit, and cried out with terror; but he soon calmed their fears by assuring them that it was he himself. Upon which, Peter desired, if he were the Lord, that he would bid him come to him on the water: and he said, Come, And Peter went out of the ship, and walked on the water to go to Jesus: but, when the waves and billows tossed, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me. Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt? As soon as they entered the vessel, the wind subsided; and the apostles, being more impressed with this than any other of our Lord's preceding miracles, came with one accord, and worshipped him, declaring of a truth that he was the Son of God; nor did Jesus decline this honour which they rendered to him.

George. At what place did they land?

Aunt. At Capernaum. No sooner had the people knowledge of his arrival, than they flocked to him with their sick; and they besought him that they might but touch the hem of his garment.

Maria. And were they healed by that?

Aunt. It being done in faith, as many as touched were healed. Shortly after the third passover which is supposed to have taken place during our Lord's

public ministry, he went to the north-west parts of Galilee, and thence into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon in Phœnicia, where he entered into a house, intending for a time to be retired; but he was found out by a woman, who was a gentile of Phœnicia.

Lucy. Why does St. Matthew call her a woman of Canaan?

Aunt. Because Phœnicia was the ancient seat of the Canaanites, properly so called. This woman came to Jesus, craving his pity, calling him Lord, and Son of David, praying him to have mercy on her daughter, who was grievously tormented with a devil. Our Lord appeared to take no notice of her: she continued, however, offering up her petition: at length the disciples desired him to grant her request, because she cried after them. Our Lord answered, That he was not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Maria. If I had been the woman I should have had no hope left.

Aunt. She was not discouraged, but cast herself at the feet of Jesus and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs. The woman, being convinced of her own unworthiness and that of her nation, replied, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's

master's table. Jesus, highly approving her confident though humble dependence upon his power and grace, applauded her for her faith, and granted her request. On her return home, she found her daughter perfectly cured.

Lucy. This verifies what our Lord says, That we ought always to pray and not to faint, for they that seek shall find, and to them that knock it shall be opened.

Aunt. Your remark is very just, my dear. Faith will always prevail: if ever we ask of the Lord, as if he were unable or unwilling to grant our request, this pagan woman may put us to shame.

Jesus, departing thence, came to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis, a tract of country, so called from ten considerable cities which it contained. Here our Lord cured a man that was deaf, who had also an impediment in his speech. And the people were astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others; and they cast them down at the feet of Jesus, and he healed them. The people had now continued to follow our Lord for three days, without taking any refreshment; upon which he had com-

passion on them, and again exerted his miraculous power for the supply of their wants. They were in number at this time about four thousand men, besides women and children : and the disciples had nothing to set before them, but seven loaves and a few little fishes ; yet was this small provision multiplied to that degree, that they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

Some time after this, Jesus went with his disciples into the towns of Cesarea Philippi. As they were journeying, he asked them, what the generality of men said of him. They gave for answer, that their opinions were various, some saying, he was John the Baptist, some Elias, and others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. Our Lord then demanded an explicit declaration of their own opinion concerning him ; upon which, Peter, who was the most forward to speak, for himself and for his brethren, said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Upon this noble confession, Jesus pronounced him blessed : but charged them to tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ till after his resurrection. Perceiving they had a true notion of his office and divinity, notwithstanding the opinions that prevailed concerning him, he began to prepare their minds for his sufferings, telling them he must go to Jerusalem, and

and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, even unto death, but, after three days, he should rise again. Peter, unable to endure the thought of his Master's sufferings, said, Far be it from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But our Lord sharply rebuked him, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me.

George. How it must grieve Peter to be called Satan!

Aunt. The word satan signifies an adversary, and it shews, in a very striking manner, how much our Lord's heart was set upon the salvation of sinners, that he should esteem his most noted favourites and followers as adversaries to him, if they attempted to dissuade him from those sufferings, which were essentially requisite to the accomplishment of our redemption. The language of Peter, who spake in the name of the apostles, on this as well as on other occasions, evidently proves that their minds were too much set upon a temporal kingdom, which they expected our Lord to establish. To remove these notions, Jesus informed them, that if they would be his disciples, they must take up the cross, and follow him; warning them, that if, to save their lives, they renounced him, they would lose eternal life; and, that it would profit a man nothing, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; but that, if any one gave up his
life

life for his sake, he should find everlasting life; and when the Son should come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, he would reward every man according to his works.

Lucy. Then I am sure we ought to watch over all our actions.

Aunt. I hope, my dear, the sentiment you have just expressed will be deeply impressed on your mind; then it will influence your future conduct in life, and you will not run after the multitude of thoughtless vain persons, who never seriously think of the account they are to render of their time: they live as if God took no knowledge of them; God is not in all their thoughts; but how will they feel at the hour of death? and how will they appear at the day of judgment? There is no other book in the world that informs us how to escape the terrors of that day but the Bible; happy are those persons who study it and profit by it.

I have passed over many of our Lord's discourses and miracles. What I relate to you in these conversations is only like giving you a view of a fine prospect at a distance, which makes you long to approach it; in proportion as you advance, fresh beauties appear, and every step unfolds something new. So, my dear children, it is with the Bible. I would advise you to ask your mamma to point out
to

to you the instructions contained in the parables, particularly that of the Rich Fool, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and Publican, the Marriage Supper, and the Talents. Entering on these subjects would too much interfere with our history, in which we will proceed at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE VIII.

Aunt. OUR Lord, having given his disciples some hints of his humiliation, thought proper to favour them with a specimen of his future glorification ; for which purpose, he took Peter, James, and John with him, and ascended a very high mountain, generally understood to be mount Tabor.

George. In what place did this mountain stand ?

Aunt. In the plains of Galilee. While our Lord was at prayer, his countenance was changed, his face shone as the sun in its brightness, and his raiment was white as the light ; and there appeared Moses and Elias, clothed with the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, freely conversing with him.

George. I should like very much to know the subject of their conversation.

Aunt. Then, my dear, your curiosity may be gratified, for the evangelist informs us, that they spake of the decease of our Lord, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Maria. What did the disciples say to this discourse ?

Aunt.

Aunt. It does not appear that they heard it, as we are told, they were heavy with sleep; but, if we consider the nature of this heaviness in all its circumstances, it does not seem to have been a common slumber, but rather the effect of that sudden display of glory, which, for a while, overpowered their senses, so that their feeble frames sunk under the pressure; something similar to what we meet with in Dan. viii. 18. and x. 8, 9. When recovered from this stupor, they were exceedingly surprised; and Peter, scarcely knowing what he said, begged of his Master that they might abide in that place, and build three tabernacles, or tents; one for our Lord, the other two for Moses and Elias; but, while he was thus talking, a bright cloud encompassed them, and a voice from thence cried, 'This is my beloved Son; hear ye him.' The apostles were now seized with greater consternation than ever, and fell on their faces, being fore afraid.

Lucy. But this was not like the tremendous display of the majesty and glory of God from mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, nor the thick darkness by which the Lord took possession of the temple.

Aunt. This luminous cloud denoted the introduction of a clearer and more encouraging discovery of the divine glory by the gospel; but, as fallen crea-

tures, we can no more bear the bright displays of the majesty of God than his tremendous frowns.

George. How long did the apostles continue thus affrighted?

Aunt. Till their divine and compassionate Master touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. As they came down from the mountain, our Lord charged them not to mention what they had seen, till after he was risen from the dead.

In the prospect of that important event, which was now drawing near, our Lord stedfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before him to a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him: the province of Samaria (as you may see in the map) lying exactly between Galilee in the north, and Judea in the south, of the land of Canaan. But the Samaritans, perceiving his design of going up to Jerusalem, refused him admittance; so great was the animosity between the two nations. Two of the disciples, James and John, were so exasperated at this, that they begged permission of our Lord, to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elijah had done to the fifty men that were sent to apprehend him. Our Lord, so far from approving of their supposed zeal for his honour,

honour, turned and rebuked them, saying, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Lucy. I heard a discourse lately from those very words. The minister observed, how careful we should be in examining our motives, lest we should fancy ourselves actuated by a concern for the cause of God and truth, when, in fact, we were under the prevailing influence of bigotry, resentment, and ill-will.

Aunt. We may also learn from this occurrence, not to suffer ourselves to be prejudiced against religion, on account of the misconduct of any of its professors, since we see the very best, if left to themselves, are too ready to manifest a temper and disposition, directly opposite to that spirit of meekness, benevolence, and charity, which true religion inculcates.

As our Lord was passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, in his way to Jerusalem, he was met by ten men who were afflicted with the leprosy. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Our Lord immediately commanded them to go and shew themselves to the priests. And, as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, perceiving that he was

VOL. III. H healed,

healed, turned back, and glorified God with a loud voice, casting himself at the feet of Jesus, and giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Our Lord particularly noticed this circumstance, in order to lessen the prejudices of the Jews against the Samaritans, with which the disciples themselves appear to have been too deeply tinged. About this time, our Lord thought fit to make a second choice of disciples: the first was of twelve, according to the number of patriarchs and tribes; this was of seventy, according to the number of the elders or senators of Israel.

Lucy. Are their names recorded?

Aunt. Some of them you may find in the Acts, but most of them are unknown. These seventy were sent out, two and two, as the apostles had been.

The feast of tabernacles now approaching, which always continued eight days, the people were in expectation of our Lord's being at Jerusalem at this feast. Different opinions, it seems, were entertained concerning him: some said, he was a good man, others affirmed that he deceived the people. Our Lord did not think proper to appear till the fourth or fifth day of the feast; he then went into the temple and taught, to the great surprise of the Jews, who were much astonished at his wisdom, seeing he had not had the advantages of a liberal education:

education: but his discourse made a great impression on the people, and brought many to believe on him. The pharisees and chief priests, hearing this, sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me: ye shall seek me, and shall not find me. By this they understood he designed to leave Judea, and go to the gentiles.

Maria. Did our Lord leave Jerusalem?

Aunt. No: we find him on the last and great day of the feast, (when they performed the pompous ceremony of offering and pouring out the water,) in the temple, thus addressing them. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters. See Prov. xviii. 4.

Maria. I do not understand the words of our Lord; what do they mean?

Aunt. They evidently refer to the abundant graces which should be poured out on the souls of believers, by the Holy Ghost, after his entrance into glory. The people still continued divided about him, and some would have taken him, but were overawed.

George. But where were the officers who were sent for that purpose?

Aunt. They were so charmed with our Lord's discourse, that they returned, declaring, That never man spake like this man. The pharisees replied, What, are ye deceived also? have any of the rulers believed on him? Nicodemus, who had formerly conversed with Jesus by night and still continued his secret disciple, being one of them, gave his opinion, that, according to their law, they could not judge any man unheard. They answered, Art thou of Galilee? search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. Upon this, the assembly broke up. A little before our Saviour left the city, the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us. Our Lord told them rather to rejoyce that their names were written in heaven.

Shortly after, our Lord departed from Jerusalem, towards Galilee. In the beginning of this journey, he entered a small village, called Bethany, on the farthest part of mount Olivet, about two miles east of Jerusalem, and went into the house of a certain woman named Martha, who, with her sister Mary, and Lazarus their brother, joyfully received him. Mary continued with Jesus, attending to his conversation, while Martha was busy in preparing for his entertainment. Martha, vexed at her sister's
not

not helping her, said, Lord, dost not thou care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. Jesus said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Lucy. Surely, aunt, our Lord does not mean that we must not concern ourselves about any worldly affairs.

Aunt. By no means: but we are not to pursue them with anxiety, as if our happiness centered in them. Our Lord did not condemn the hospitality of Martha, but gave her to understand, that her care and toil respected matters of far less concern than her sister's. Our Lord, after going from place to place, for about two months, returned again to Jerusalem, at the feast of dedication, which lasted eight days. It was instituted by Judas Maccabeus, in memory of his dedication of the temple, after he had cleared the altar of the horrid profanations of Antiochus Epiphanes; a particular account of which I shall give you in the Jewish history.

Our Lord, walking along the streets on a sabbath-day, saw a poor man, who had been blind from his birth: and he said to his disciples, I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work.

Maria. But day always succeeds night, and what is left undone one day may be done another.

Aunt. Our Lord certainly meant the night of death, instructing us not to put off doing good to another opportunity, as that may never arrive: for when death comes, time with us is no more. But, to return;—Our Lord spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, with which he anointed the eyes of the blind man; and he said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.

Lucy. One should think clay was more calculated to make a man blind than to restore him to sight.

Aunt. Our Lord thereby shewed that the most unlikely means will be efficacious, when he appoints and blesses them. The man did as Jesus had commanded, and came to his neighbours, seeing.

Maria. How surprised they must be!

Aunt. Some said it was he, others said, it was like him: the man determined the matter by saying, I am he. Then they enquired how his eyes were opened, and, being informed, they took him to the pharisees, who interrogated him; to whom he told the simple fact. Some of them cried out, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day; others said, How can a man that is a sinner, do such miracles? Being thus divided in their sentiments, they appealed to the man, to know what
he

he thought of the person who had opened his eyes. He replied, that he believed him to be a prophet. Some then suggested that he had not been blind; upon which his parents were called, and examined: they avowed him to be their son, and that he was born blind, but the means by which he obtained his sight, they denied any knowledge of, fearing the Jews, who had already agreed, if any confessed that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue: they, therefore, referred the matter to their son, saying, He is of age, ask him. The son being again called, was told to give God the glory, seeing that this man was a sinner. He answered, he knew nothing about that; but this he knew, that, whereas he was once blind, he now saw. As they continued to question him, he said unto them, Will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, saying, Thou art his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples; we know that God spake unto Moses; but, as for this fellow, we know not whence he is. The man replied, This is wonderful, that ye should doubt whence he is, when he hath opened mine eyes: if this man were not of God, he could not do these things? Upon this, their anger arose, and they said, Dost thou teach us? Then they cast him out, or excommunicated him.

Maria.

Maria. Then, what became of him?

Aunt. Our blessed Lord knew the testimony which he had borne of him, and how he had been treated by the Jews. And when he found him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? The man replied, Who is he, Lord? Jesus said, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe.

Lucy. He had before acknowledged Jesus as a prophet.

Aunt. But he now revered him as the chief of prophets, the expected Messiah.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE IX.

Aunt. **B**EFORE the conclusion of the feast, it being winter, our Saviour walked in the magnificent portico, commonly called Solomon's Porch, probably to be skreened from the inclemency of the weather. Here the Jews assembled round him, desiring him plainly to tell them if he was the Christ. Our Lord condescended to answer them in the fullest manner, declaring that He and his Father were one.

Maria. Did they, upon this, acknowledge him to be the Christ?

Aunt. No; in a rage they took up stones to stone him. Jesus asked them for which of his good works they stoned him? They answered, Not for any good work, but for blasphemy, because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus replied by appealing to his works, as an evidence which should command their belief, they being real proofs that He was in his Father, and his Father in Him.

George. Did this appease their rage?

Aunt. No: they sought to take him, but he escaped out of their hands. Shortly after, he departed out of the

the city, and went over the river Jordan to Bethabara, where John had formerly baptized. And many resorted to him, and said, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true.

We are now arrived at the fourth year (as it is generally computed) of Christ's public ministry. While Jesus abode in this place, he was followed by numbers of people, whom he taught and cured of their distempers. Some of them, seeing the compassion of Jesus, brought their little children that he might bless them; but the disciples rebuked them, at which our Lord was displeased, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them. This is an encouragement to parents to bring their children to Christ.

Maria. How are children to be taken to Christ now he is in heaven?

Aunt. By faith and prayer; not only once, but continually. About this time, our Lord received a message from Martha and Mary, informing him that their brother Lazarus, whom he loved, was sick.

Maria. Did our Lord go to Lazarus?

Aunt. Not immediately: and probably sent the messengers away, after they had heard him say these words, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.

George.

George. What must his sisters think when he actually died?

Aunt. That is impossible for us to say: but they certainly expected great things from our Lord, and his absence must considerably increase their distress; for Jesus abode two days where he was, yet he knew every thing which was transacting at Bethany; and he said unto his disciples, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. The disciples, taking this for a favourable symptom, said, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well: thereby intimating that the Lord had no need to expose himself to his enemies by going to him. Then said Jesus plainly, He is dead: nevertheless, let us go unto him. Thomas said, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Maria. Did he want to die with Lazarus?

Aunt. No; but with his master, whose death he considered as inevitable, if he went near Jerusalem, where the Jews had so lately sought to stone him. It was four days after the death of Lazarus before our Lord arrived at Bethany; and it was customary with the Jews to inter their deceased friends before sun-set on the day of their death. Many of the Jews from Jerusalem were come to condole with the mourning sisters. But Martha, no sooner heard that Jesus was coming than she left the company, and went to meet him. As soon as she saw him, she thus addressed him; Lord, if thou hadst been here,

here, my brother had not died; but I know that even now whatever thou askest of God, he will give thee.

Lucy. Did she expect her brother would be restored to life?

Aunt. Her subsequent answers shew she had very little hope of that; most probably she meant with regard to their own comfort and support under the affliction. But Jesus said unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

Maria. What did Martha say to this?

Aunt. She said, I know that he shall rise in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus replied, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? Martha answered, Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world. And she went her way.

George. I don't understand our Lord's words; for those who do believe in him die; and how can the dead believe?

Aunt. Our Lord meant by this to administer consolation, not only to Martha, but to all his people to the end of time. They die indeed like other men; but those who have believed in him, though their bodies lie in the grave, their souls live in heaven: and those who
are

are dead in sins (as we all are by nature), by believing in Jesus are made alive to God.

Lucy. Mary lost the benefit of this conversation.

Aunt. But she had the satisfaction to know that Jesus had not forgotten her; for her sister came to her, and said, The Master calleth for thee. And she arose in haste, and went out: for our Lord was still in the place where Martha first met him. The Jews that were with Mary followed her, supposing she was gone to the grave of her brother to weep.

George. Did they not hear what Martha said to her?

Aunt. No; for Martha called her secretly. When Mary came to Jesus, she addressed him as her sister had done before. Jesus seeing Mary, and the Jews who were with her, weep, sympathized with them, and wept also. Thus was our compassionate Saviour touched with the feeling of their infirmities! It might truly be said, agreeable to the language of Isaiah, chap. lxiii. 9, In all their afflictions he was afflicted. Now these things, my dear children, are written for our instruction, that we may be encouraged, under all our distresses, to come to him for support and consolation. See Heb. iv. 15, 16. But, to return;—Jesus said, Where have ye laid him?

him? They answered, Lord, come and see. And they came to the sepulchre, which was a cave, with a stone at its mouth. Jesus bade them take away the stone; to which Martha objected, alledging that by this time the body must be in a state of putrefaction, as he had been dead four days. Jesus reminded her of what he had said, that if she would believe, she should see the glory of God. When the stone was removed, our Lord, with eyes lifted up to heaven, addressed himself to God, saying, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always: but because of the people who stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Maria. Why did our Saviour address God on this occasion?

Aunt. Because the Jews had repeatedly ascribed his miracles to the power of Satan: our Lord therefore made this appeal to his Father in heaven, that it might appear that he performed them by power from above; and that the Father thereby bare witness to him, and authorized all those declarations of his own dignity and authority, which the Jews called blasphemy.

Lucy. I could paint to my imagination all the people waiting the event with solemn expectation!

Aunt. Probably they did not yet expect our Lord
would

would raise him to life : what then must be their surprise, when Jesus said, Lazarus, come forth ! Death obeyed Him who hath power over the grave, and delivered up its captive. And Lazarus came forth in his grave-clothes. Jesus said, Loose him, and let him go. The greater part of the spectators were convinced, and believed in Jesus ; yet there were others who would not be persuaded though one actually rose from the dead, but were the more enraged, and went and reported the matter at Jerusalem.

George. Pray, aunt, let us follow them to Jerusalem.

Aunt. We will, George, at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE X.

George. **P**RAY, aunt, what was the consequence of the report of Lazarus being restored to life?

Aunt. The pharisees and chief priests called a council, in which they came to this determination, that if any man knew where Jesus was, he should disclose it, that he might be apprehended: and from that hour they sought all opportunities to put him to death. Our Lord avoided their fury for a time, by retiring to a little city called Ephraim, in the borders of Samaria, not far from Jericho, where he continued a few days with the apostles. Six days before the passover, our Lord went to Bethany.

Maria. He would be an acceptable visitant to Lazarus and his sisters.

Aunt. At supper Martha served, but Lazarus sat at table. Mary, to shew her gratitude to her beloved Lord, took a pound of very costly ointment, and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with the hair of her head; and the house was filled with the odour

odour of the ointment. Judas Iscariot complained of this as extravagant, saying, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, (which, in our money, would be nine pounds seven shillings and six-pence,) and given to the poor? But Mary was commended for this action by her divine Master.

George. Did Judas mean by this to shew his good-will to the poor?

Aunt. It appears that his regard to the poor was only a pretence; but, having the charge of the bag, he wished to increase the flock, that he might have the better opportunity to purloin; for, we are told, he was a thief. When the Jews found Jesus was at Bethany, they flocked thither, not for his sake only, but that they might see Lazarus. The chief priests, finding that, by means of the resurrection of Lazarus, many believed on Jesus, consulted together that they might put Lazarus to death.

Lucy. Was ever any thing so absurd! for the same power that raised him once could raise him again.

Aunt. It shows the extreme depravity of human nature, and the awful tendency of sin, to infatuate the mind, as well as to harden the heart.

We are now, my dear children, entering on the relation of one of the most solemn transactions that ever took place in our world; yet to us, if we make a proper use of it, the most important and glorious.

The next day after the supper at Bethany, Jesus, intending no longer to avoid the fury of the Jews, resolved to make his public entry into Jerusalem, and, for that purpose, left Bethany, it being the first day of the week, in the morning, taking his disciples and others with him. When they were come to Bethphage, upon mount Olivet, somewhat less than a mile from Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples unto a village over against them, telling them, that there they should find an ass tied, and a colt with her, and that they should loose them, and bring them to him.

George. What would the owners say to this?

Aunt. Very probably the disciples might put the same question to our Lord; for, he said, If any man say ought unto you, say, The Lord hath need of them, and he will send them; thus shewing he had power over the hearts of men. The disciples obeyed, and found them as Jesus had said: and they brought the ass and colt, and threw their upper garments on them instead of saddles.

George. Which did our Lord ride on?

Aunt. The colt; thus fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah, chap. ix. 9, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding on an ass, and upon a colt

colt the foal of an ass. When our Lord's intention of entering Jerusalem was known, the people who came to the feast, having heard of the resurrection of Lazarus, and being excited, by an extraordinary impulse, came running out of the city in crowds to meet Jesus; some strewing branches of trees, and others spreading their garments in the way where he was to pass; hereby giving him those honours which were used in the triumphs of kings and emperors. And the multitude cried out, Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Lucy. Pray, aunt, what is the meaning of the word Hosanna?

Aunt. The signification of it is, Save, I pray. When he was come to Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. Our Lord, to show that his kingdom was spiritual, immediately repaired to the temple, where he exerted his authority in driving out the buyers and sellers, as he had done two years before. The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

When the priests and scribes saw the wonderful things which he did, and the children who had followed him into the temple, crying, Hosanna to the
Son

Son of David, they were much displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? Implying that it was unworthy of our Lord to receive praise from children; but Jesus answered, by referring them to the scripture, Psal. viii. 2, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.

Maria. I am amazed they did not seize on our Lord, having before given orders to apprehend him.

Aunt. They sought opportunities to do it, but were afraid of the people, who heard him with attention and veneration. Jesus now declared that the hour was approaching in which he should be glorified. While he was contemplating the sufferings he was to endure previous to his glorification, his soul was overwhelmed with distress, and he said, Father, save me from this hour: then, as it were, recollecting himself, he said, But for this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

George. What did the people think of this?

Aunt. Some thought it was thunder; others, that an angel spake to him: but Jesus told them, That this voice came for their sakes. After giving them farther information, and hinting what death he should die, he returned to Bethany with his apostles, and lodged there that night.

On the next day, being what we call MONDAY, our Lord went again to Jerusalem, and taught publicly in the temple, returning in the evening to Bethany. On TUESDAY morning our Lord again repaired to Jerusalem, and taught in the temple. Having concluded his discourse; as he sat in view of the Treasury, he observed the rich men casting in their gifts: and there was a poor woman, who cast in two mites, which make a farthing.

Maria. So small a sum could not be of much use.

Aunt. Hear in what estimation our Lord held this gift. He remarked that this poor woman had put in more than they all; for they of their abundance had cast into the offering of God; but she had given her all, by which she manifested her good-will: and a small sum, with a willing mind, is more acceptable to God than the largest donation without it. Our Lord, in his way to Bethany, stopping on mount Olivet, in full view of the temple and city, foretold the destruction of both, and the signs that should precede that awful event.

We have no particular account of the transactions of the day following, or WEDNESDAY; probably it was spent wholly at Bethany, and that our Lord did not repair to the city as usual. But the Sanhedrim met at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest,

priest, to consult together how they might secretly take Jesus, to put him to death; some thinking it would not be safe at this great solemnity, lest it should cause a sedition among the people, who had so lately shewed him such great honour: but an end was soon put to all their difficulties, by the appearance of Judas, who offered, for a sum of money, to deliver Jesus into their hands. They immediately bargained with him for thirty pieces of silver, amounting to no more than three pounds fifteen shillings in our money, the usual price for slaves at that time.

George. If I had been wicked enough to have acted as Judas did, I think I should have had more pride than to have sold my master for the price of a slave.

Aunt. The sum given for our Lord exactly accomplished the prophecy in Zech. xi. 12. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. Judas was to seek an opportunity, in the absence of the people, to deliver up his master. But we will not proceed any farther to day.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XI.

Aunt. **W**E are now, my dear children, arrived at the last passover in our Saviour's time, which is supposed to be the fourth during his public ministry, and the most renowned that was ever solemnized, in which the only true paschal lamb was slain and offered up.

On THURSDAY morning, the apostles enquired of our Lord, where he would eat the passover, and where the lamb should be made ready: upon which, Jesus sent Peter and John to Jerusalem, to prepare all things according to the law; telling them, that when they entered the city, they should meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, by following of whom they should find a spacious guest-chamber, ready prepared by the master of the house. The two disciples found every thing as our Lord had said: and they made ready the passover. In the evening, Jesus sat down with his twelve apostles, telling them, that with earnestness he had desired to eat that passover with them before he suffered. He then informed them, that one of them should betray him;

him; which made them exceeding sorrowful; and they each said, Lord, Is it I? Jesus answered, It is he that dippeth with me in the dish. And Judas said, Master, Is it I?

George. I wonder how he durst put the question, when he knew what he had done.

Aunt. It shows how sin hardens the heart. At the conclusion of the supper, our Lord thought fit to institute a new rite and sacrament, instead of the passover. In commemoration of his infinite love to mankind, he took bread and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Lucy. Had our Lord any particular design in instituting this ordinance at the time of commemorating the passover?

Aunt. Undoubtedly he had, as both referred to the same solemn transaction; the one, as a type, shortly to be accomplished, and then to be regarded no more; the other, as a memorial of the same important event, to be observed to the end of time. For it is said, As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Let a man therefore



therefore examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. See 1 Cor. xi. 26, 28. After this, our Lord and his apostles sang a hymn, and concluded. But, before they departed, he gave them his farewell exhortations, which you will find in the 14th, 15th, and 16th, chapters of John: in the 17th we have a remarkable specimen of the intercession of Christ, in which he prayeth not only for his apostles, but for all who should believe in his name. Our Lord, having finished his divine prayer, departed out of the city, with his apostles, over the brook Cedron or Kidron towards mount Olivet.

Maria. When did Judas leave them?

Aunt. Some suppose immediately after the supper; others, upon their leaving the house. As they walked, our Lord conversed with his disciples, saying, All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But, after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered, Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will not I. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, This night before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said, Though I should die with thee, yet will not I deny thee. He spake in the warmth of his affections, but he was ignorant of

the treachery of his heart, and the force of temptation, forgetting that nothing short of power divine could uphold him.

After they had passed Kidron, they came to Gethsemane, at the foot of mount Olivet, where was a garden well known to Judas; our Lord having often repaired thither with his disciples, for retirement and devotion. Jesus ordered eight of his apostles to stay at the entrance, while he, with Peter, James, and John went in: and here his sufferings began. He told them that his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; but that they must watch awhile with him. He then went a little farther, and fell on his face, and poured out his soul unto God. He now laboured under more than human nature alone could sustain, the full pressure of God's wrath against the sins of the world, lying upon him. After praying three times, he rose up and came to his disciples, whom he found sleeping for sorrow. And he said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. He had scarcely uttered these words, when there appeared a company of soldiers, officers, chief priests, and pharisees, armed with swords and staves, and furnished with lanterns and torches. Judas had given them a sign, that the person he should kiss was the man: and this vile traitor went up to
Jesus,

Jesus, saying, Hail, Master ! and kissed him. Jesus made this gentle reply, Dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss ? Then, stepping forwards, he said unto the soldiers, Whom seek ye ? They answered, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus replied, I am he. Instead of immediately seizing him, confounded and astonished, they fell to the ground.

Lucy. The Lord shewed by this, how easily he could deprive them of the power of hurting him.

Aunt. It evidently proved that they could do nothing but by his permission ; and that none could take away his life unless he laid it down of himself. As soon as the men had recovered from their consternation, Jesus repeated the question, to which they returned the same answer : he then requested them, if they sought him only, to let his disciples go their way ; thus taking care that they should escape that storm, to which he willingly exposed himself. The rude multitude then laid hands on the blessed Jesus ; upon which, Peter, to shew his promised courage, drew his sword, with which he smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.

George. I suppose his intention was to cleave his skull.

Aunt. But Jesus rebuked Peter, bidding him put up his sword, and telling him, that if he had thought

proper to decline suffering, he could have prayed to his Father, and have had more than twelve legions of angels at his command; but how then would the scriptures be accomplished, which declared he must suffer. Our Lord took this occasion to fulfil his own precepts of doing good for evil, by immediately healing the servant's ear.

Maria. What wretches they must be to persist in their purpose, when Jesus manifested such goodness as well as power! I feel for the poor disciples: if I had been in their place, I should have broken my heart with grief.

Aunt. Their courage utterly failed them when they saw their master bound; for they all forsook him and fled. And Jesus was led by the multitude to Annas, who was father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest: but he sent him to Caiaphas's palace, where the Sanhedrim were assembled, though thus late at night. Our Lord, making no reply to the false witnesses that were brought against him, the high priest at length said, I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God; upon which our Lord explicitly declared himself to be the Messiah, saying, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the Almighty, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes,

clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy: what think ye? The whole assembly, on hearing this, joined with Caiaphas in pronouncing our Lord guilty, and condemning him to death. They then left him to the mercy of the servants and soldiers till morning.

Lucy. What a night must Jesus have endured, exposed to the scoffs and buffetings of those wretches! But where were the disciples during his examination?

Aunt. Peter, hoping to pass unnoticed, mixed with the throng to see the event; and, entering the common hall of the high priest's palace, where the servants and officers sat round a fire, he also sat down with them to warm himself; when a maid-servant, fixing her eyes upon him, said aloud, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth, asking him, if he was not his disciple? Peter, startled at the question, denied it before them all, and withdrew into the porch, where he heard the cock crow.

Maria. Did not this put him in mind of our Lord's words?

Aunt. He took no notice of this warning, continuing still in the place of temptation. Another maid charged him with being the disciple of Jesus; but he confidently denied it a second time, with the addition of an oath; so natural is it for one sin to lead to another. About an hour after, another began to

converse with him on the same subject, telling him, that his speech discovered him to be a Galilean; and, to make the matter the more indisputable, one, who was kinsman to the man whose ear he had cut off, declared that he saw him in the garden with Jesus. Peter then began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. Immediately the cock crew a second time. And Jesus turned and looked on Peter. Then remembered he the word of the Lord, how he had said, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

George. Peter was more to be pitied than any of the disciples, for his affliction must be tenfold, from the reflection of his ingratitude.

Aunt. Sin and sorrow are inseparably connected. At our next meeting we will go on with our Lord's examination.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XII.

Aunt. **E**ARLY on FRIDAY morning the Sanhedrim met again in council, when Jesus was brought before them: they again asked him, if he was the Son of God; and, upon his answering in the affirmative, they declared they needed no further witness. They then resolved to deliver him to the Roman power.

George. I wonder what Judas thought of himself.

Aunt. When he saw matters carried so far, he was compelled, by the torment which he endured through remorse of conscience, to bring back the money, declaring before the Sanhedrim, that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood: they dismissed him with a rough answer, saying, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he threw down the silver, and departed. The chief priests then consulted what should be done with the money, concluding that it would not be lawful to put it into the treasury, as it was the price of blood; at length they resolved to make a purchase of the potter's field to bury

bury strangers in, thereby accomplishing the prediction of Zechariah, chap. xi. 12, 13.

Maria. What became of Judas?

Aunt. He went and hanged himself; and, as his wickedness was beyond precedent, his death was such as might occasion general notice; for he fell headlong from the tree, and his bowels gushed out.

Lucy. I cannot think how the Sanhedrim could proceed, when even the traitor himself had declared our Lord innocent.

Aunt. In some measure to cast off the odium from themselves, they hurried Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor; but refused to enter into the hall of a pagan, lest they should be defiled, and rendered unfit for celebrating the passover. Therefore Pilate came out to them, to know what accusation they had against Jesus. They answered, that if he had not been a malefactor, they should not have brought him. Pilate told them, they might take him and judge him according to their law: but they alledged they had lost the power of putting any to death: (which some say was taken away from them about three years before:) a plain proof that the sceptre was departed from Judah, and consequently that Shiloh was come. See Gen. xlix. 10.

George. Nothing would satisfy them but his death.

Aunt. And, to attain their object, they accused him of perverting the nation, and proclaiming himself Messiah the king. When Pilate heard this, he thought it became him to examine the matter, and returned into the judgment-hall, where he put this question to Jesus, Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus would not deny his kingdom, but declared, it was not of this world: for that, if it were, his followers would have saved him from the Jews. Pilate, surprised to see one who stood at his bar assume sovereignty, asked him in derision, whether he was really a king. Our Lord answered, For this end was I born and sent into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Pilate rose suddenly from the bench, and, taking Jesus with him, returned to the people; declaring that he found no fault in the man.

Lucy. His innocency is proved by his very judge; and yet to think they should still persist in having his life!

Aunt. They grew more fierce when they saw Pilate willing to release him. Pilate, finding Jesus was a Galilean, sent him to Herod, who was then at the feast at Jerusalem. Herod had heard of the fame of Jesus, and was much pleased at his being brought before him, as he entertained hopes of seeing some miracle wrought by him.

Maria

Maria. I feel sorry that this wicked man should be honoured with a sight of our Lord.

Aunt. It was permitted further to display the malice of the Jews, and the innocency of Christ.

Maria. Did our Lord gratify Herod's curiosity by performing any miracles?

Aunt. No; nor even answering his questions. Herod, instead of looking upon him as a rival king, treated him as an insignificant person; and his soldiers and guards took the blessed Jesus, and arrayed him in some cast-off robes of royalty, deriding him, and carrying him along the streets in mock-majesty to Pilate again.

Lucy. Oh, aunt, what will those persons feel, when they see Jesus seated on his throne, and themselves brought before his tribunal!

Aunt. They, with all in every succeeding age, who have despised and rejected him, will be brought, like the devils, to believe and tremble, when they see him in his glory, with his holy angels, the last trumpet sounding, and he on the judgment seat. Then they will behold him as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Maria. But how surprising that Jesus should leave his throne of glory to come down and suffer such indignities from his creatures!

Aunt. And what we have related is but a part of his

his sufferings. Pilate, when Jesus was brought back to him, told the Jews, that he could not find him guilty of those crimes laid to his charge, and that Herod, to whom he had been sent, had passed the same judgment; but, to appease their fury, he said, he would scourge him, and dismiss him. Perceiving they would not agree to that, he thought of another expedient. At the passover it was a custom to release a criminal whom they should choose. Pilate had a notorious malefactor, named Barabbas, who was convicted of murder; and he imagined, by proposing Jesus and Barabbas to them, they would prefer an innocent man to a thief and a murderer.

While these things were in agitation, the wife of Pilate sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. Pilate then asked the Jews which of the two should be released. They cried, Away with this man, and give us Barabbas. He then said, What shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all cried, Crucify him, crucify him: thus dictating the punishment, which was the most cruel that could be named. Pilate, a third time, declared he could find nothing worthy of death in him: he would therefore chastise him, and let him go. Upon which the people tumultuously required that he might be crucified. At length

length their voices prevailed upon the governor, who ordered Jesus first to be scourged ; a punishment very dishonourable among the Romans, and never inflicted on any but slaves : this was performed, no doubt, with extraordinary severity, for the soldiers offered many indignities beside. After they had scourged Jesus, they took him into the common hall, and, having stripped him, threw a loose purple coat on him for a robe, put a wreath of thorns upon his head for a crown, and a reed, or cane, in his hand for a sceptre ; then, in derision, they saluted him, and bowed the knee, crying, Hail, King of the Jews ! at the same time spitting in his face, and striking him with the cane on his head, that he might be the more wounded by the thorns.

Lucy. I am surpris'd that Pilate should suffer an innocent person to be thus cruelly treated !

Aunt. I do not think there is a similar instance in history : for if an unjust judge has been willing to gratify the malice of the people, he has generally disguised his sentiments, and condemned under a suppos'd crime ; but Pilate could not do this, being forced, from the convictions of his own conscience, to speak the truth, though, in so doing, he condemn'd himself. Pilate brought forth Jesus to them, with all his mock ornaments, his head and face imbrued in blood from the piercing of the thorny crown. Well might

might Isaiah in prophecy say of him, His visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men, Isa. lii. 14. Then Pilate said to the multitude, BEHOLD THE MAN!

Maria. How could they see such suffering innocence, and not relent!

Aunt. They still persisted in the cry of, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate then said, Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him. They answered, that, according to their law, he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. This occasioned new perplexities in Pilate's mind; he therefore took Jesus back, and began a fresh examination, enquiring whence was his original: but Jesus returned him no answer. Then Pilate said, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power either to crucify thee, or to release thee? Jesus replied, Thou couldst have no power at all, except it were given thee from above. Pilate again sought to release him, but the Jews told him, that if he let this man go he was not Cæsar's friend; for, said they, Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. This effectually wrought on Pilate, and he brought Jesus in the same robes to his public tribunal, in a paved place called Gabbatha.

George. I wonder Pilate did not seize the opportunity

tunity which the Jews gave him, of condemning Jesus for treason against the emperor.

Aunt. Wicked men, my dear, can neither act nor speak, but as they are permitted of God. We have sufficient evidence from history, that Pilate was naturally of a violent, furious, and cruel temper, which the Jews had experienced: his patience therefore, in the investigation of this affair, might, if the Jews had not been wholly blinded by the hardness of their hearts, have made them consider whether there was not something supernatural in it. Pilate, before he passed sentence, said to the Jews, Behold your king! But they cried out, Away with him, crucify him. He then said, Shall I crucify your king? They answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

This is the first time that we find they owned the Roman Emperor for their sovereign. Thus they themselves acknowledged the sceptre was departed. Pilate then called for water, and, washing his hands before all the people, declared himself innocent of the blood of that just person, and that they must answer to it. Upon which they cried out, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then Pilate released unto them Barabbas, and condemned Jesus to be crucified.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XIII.

Aunt. **A**T our last interview, we left our dear Lord under the sentence of condemnation, forsaken by all the world. We are now to follow him, from the tribunal to the place of execution. The soldiers took the purple coat off, and put his own garments on him, and then laid a heavy cross on his shoulders, making him, like Isaac of old, bear the wood on which he was to be sacrificed. Thus he passed through one of the principal streets of the city.

George. How must the enemies of Christ triumph ! but where were his disciples and followers ?

Aunt. Some of them followed him to Calvary, whither we will now attend him. Jesus being overcome with fatigue on the road, they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, to bear the cross the rest of the way. Thus was the great sacrifice conveyed out of the holy city, as an accursed thing ; just as the scape goat, laden with the iniquities of the people, and the beasts for sin-offerings, were, by the law, carried out of the camp. Passing the gates, they brought him to a place called Golgotha and Calvary. Then, stripping him

of his garments, they nailed his hands and feet, with his body stretched out on the cross, and lifted him up, as the brazen serpent was lifted up on the pole in the wilderness. It was now about the third hour of the day, or what we call, nine o'clock in the morning. To put him to the greater shame, and to obscure his innocence, they crucified him between two malefactors, one on each side; thus accomplishing Isaiah's prophecy, He was numbered among the transgressors. On the top of his cross Pilate had written this inscription, **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS**, in three of the most universal languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The chief priests were offended at this, and desired Pilate to alter it; but he answered them, What I have written, I have written.

Maria. Is not crucifixion a lingering death?

Aunt. It is; for the sufferer may endure excruciating pain for hours. The first sentence our Lord was heard to utter in this situation was a prayer for his enemies, saying, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Lucy. One should have thought, this would have drawn compassion from the most hardened.

Aunt. The executioners, who were four soldiers, were unmindful of the words or sufferings of our dear Lord, intent only on dividing his garments: but there arose a difficulty about the coat, which was woven

ven from the top to the bottom without any seam; rather than spoil it, they agreed to cast lots for it, and so undesignedly fulfilled what David says in prophecy, Psal. xxii. 18, They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

George. Surely our Lord found at least some pity from the multitude.

Aunt. None: for they added to his misery by their speeches and blasphemies, wagging their heads in contempt, and crying, Thou that hast power to destroy the temple, and rebuild it in three days, save thyself, if thou be the Son of God, and come down from the cross. The priests and rulers, from whom one might have expected more liberal treatment, joined with the rabble in deriding him, saying, He saved others, but cannot save himself; if he be really the king of Israel, the chosen of God, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him: he trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him, for he declared himself to be the Son of God. The soldiers also bade him come down if he were the king of Israel: and one of the malefactors who were crucified with him joined in the derision.

Maria. I wonder our Lord did not strike them all dead! why should he endure their insults?

Aunt. Our Lord came not to destroy, but to save. And he gave a most glorious proof of it, in the salva-

tion of one of the thieves; who, having rebuked the other, made application to Jesus, saying, Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Jesus immediately extended his mercy to him, saying, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. Thus did our Lord prove himself mighty to save, while in the most abject situation. Jesus, seeing his beloved disciple John, and the Virgin Mary his mother, and other women, filled with inexpressible grief; he spake to his mother, saying, Woman, behold thy son! meaning John: and he said to John, Behold thy mother! and from that time John took her to his own house.

About the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land, whilst the Son of God hung in-expiring agonies. The sun in the firmament hid his face, as if ashamed to behold so awful a spectacle, and wrapped himself in thick darkness. Thus was the frame of nature changed when the God of Nature suffered. This was not a natural eclipse, because the moon was not then in conjunction, but in the full; and the darkness was prodigious, in the nature as well as in the degree of it. This miraculous darkness is supposed to have been universal, and is recorded by Pagan writers. It is said that Dionysius the Areopagite, being in Egypt, and observing this strange darkness, cried out to his friend Apollophanes, That either God himself suffered, or sympathized with the sufferer.

Maria.

Maria. How long did this darkness last !

Aunt. From the sixth to the ninth hour ; that is from twelve o'clock at noon till three in the afternoon. All this time our blessed Lord continued suffering ; but the pain which he endured in his body was the least of his sufferings.

George. What other way did he suffer ?

Aunt. In his soul. I would have you read the 53^d chapter of Isaiah, where you will see the sufferings of our Lord described : in the 10th verse, it is said, Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. And God did not spare his own Son. As he had undertaken to die for sinners, the stroke of justice, deservedly ours, was inflicted upon him ; and under the weight of our guilt, he cried out, Eli ! Eli ! lama sabachthani ? My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? Some of the spectators, hearing the words Eli ! Eli ! thought he called for Elias to help him in his distress. Then Jesus, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. And some gave him vinegar that he might drink ; others said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come and help him. Jesus, having tasted the vinegar, said, It is finished. Then, with a strong voice, he cried, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, he gave up the ghost. His death was immediately followed by a most terrible earthquake,

quake, which rent the rocks asunder; and the graves were opened, and many of the saints arose: the veil of the temple also, which separated the sacred Mo-
saic mysteries from the eyes of the people, was rent in
twain from the top to the bottom; shewing that God
had forsaken his former residence, and put a period to
all the temple ministrations; the prophecies and types
concerning the Messiah being all fulfilled, and the
great sacrifice offered.

George. It was enough to make the people think
the judgment-day was come!

Aunt. They were full of terror and consternation.
The centurion and soldiers cried out, Certainly
this was the Son of God. And the people, when
they beheld these things, smote their breasts, and went
away in great amazement. The Jews requested Pi-
late that the bodies might not continue on the crosses,
but that their legs might be broken to hasten their
death, and their bodies taken down, as the next day
was the sabbath. This was immediately executed on
the two thieves; but the soldiers, finding Jesus al-
ready dead, instead of breaking his legs, one of them
pierced his side with a spear, and forthwith came
thereout blood and water. Thus was that scrip-
ture fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken;
and another scripture which saith, They shall look
on him whom they have pierced. Among the disci-
ples

ples of our Lord there was one, named Joseph of Arimathea, a city of Judea, a man of wealth and honour, and one of the rulers in Jerusalem.

George. Where was he when our Lord was condemned?

Aunt. We are told that he did not consent to the judgment which was passed on Jesus; most probably he absented himself through fear of the Jews. But, on the death of his dear master, he was filled with more courage, and went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus, that he might give it an honourable interment. The governor hesitated, questioning whether he was dead so soon; but, being assured by the centurion, that he was, he commanded the body to be given to Joseph, who, taking it from the cross, wrapped it in fine linen clothes. Nicodemus the ruler, who came to Jesus by night, willing to share with Joseph in the last mournful acts of friendship to their Lord and Master, brought a mixture of aloes and myrrh, about a hundred pounds weight. And they two wrapped up the body with the perfumes and spices, bearing it away to a garden near at hand, belonging to Joseph, where was a new sepulchre, which he had hewn out of a rock. There they carefully laid the body of Jesus, rolling a large stone upon the mouth of the sepulchre.

Mary Magdalene, and the other women, who were present

present at our Lord's death, attended his burial also, designing to bring new spices after the sabbath for the further embalming him; by which they testified their affection to him, but not their expectation of his resurrection.

Lucy. How the enemies of our Lord must triumph!

Aunt. They did; but they remembered what the disciples and followers of Jesus appear to have forgotten. Our Lord had given them peculiar demonstrations of his divinity, and that he could not be holden of death: but they, overwhelmed with sorrow at what had befallen their Lord, could not think of any thing to comfort them: all their hopes were dead, and they remained in desponding unbelief.

George. But what was it that the Jews remembered?

Aunt. They went to Pilate and told him, that the impostor he had lately condemned (by which they meant Jesus) had said in his life-time, that he would rise again in three days; they therefore desired Pilate to give command, that the sepulchre should be watched by a strong guard till the third day was past, to prevent his disciples from stealing the body by night and persuading the people he was risen from the dead. Pilate, accordingly, gave them a guard, and told them to secure the tomb: upon

which the rulers went with the soldiers, and set a seal upon the stone.

Lucy. Then, instead of the friends of our Lord watching for his appearance, he was surrounded by enemies.

Aunt. This tended to render the truth of our Lord's resurrection the more indisputable. But the relation of that important event we must leave till our next meeting.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XIV.

Aunt. **N**OTWITHSTANDING all the care of the rulers to secure the tomb, when the time came, in which our Lord triumphed over death, no bars or bolts could confine him ; but he came forth in terrible majesty, the earth quaking as at his death. At the same time an angel descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it : his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

Maria. What a fright the guards must be in !

Aunt. They trembled, and became as dead men : but when they were recovered, they went into the city, and told the chief priests the things which they had seen.

George. They could not deny the testimony of so many witnesses.

Aunt. But they bribed the soldiers to say that his disciples came and stole him away while they slept.

Lucy. Was it not death for a soldier to sleep on duty ?

Aunt. It was ; but they obviated this difficulty
by

by assuring them, that if it came to the governor's ears, they would secure them from punishment. The soldiers took the money, and did as they were instructed. Our Lord's resurrection was followed by that of many of the saints who appeared to several persons in the city.

Maria. But did the women go to the sepulchre with the spices as they intended? or were they intimidated by hearing of the guard being there?

Aunt. They knew nothing of the guard or seal, their conversation by the way being how they should remove the stone from the tomb. When they came they found neither guard nor stone to hinder their entrance, but were extremely surprised to perceive that the body was gone.

Maria. Did they not then recollect what our Lord had said concerning his resurrection?

Aunt. They did not; nor did they fully believe it, when it was told them by the angels: for, while they were in the tomb, there appeared two angels in shining garments; and they were afraid. The angels said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? Fear not: for we know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen: remember how he spake to you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified,

and the third day rise again. Come, see the place where the Lord lay ; and go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, that he is risen from the dead. They immediately left the sepulchre, and went in haste to find the disciples, their minds being filled with joy and wonder.

Maria. What an inexpressible pleasure this must be to the disciples !

Aunt. On the contrary, they believed them not: their words seemed as idle tales. But Peter and John ran to the sepulchre. John, arriving first, stooped down, and, looking in, saw the linen clothes lying. Peter, coming up, being more bold, went directly in : besides the clothes, he saw the napkin that was about his head, lying in a separate place ; John then went in, and saw the same things, upon which they concluded the body was removed, and so departed. Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, not understanding that her Lord was risen, and still supposing he must have been removed, stood weeping by the sepulchre ; and, looking into it, she saw two angels in bright apparel, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, the one at the head, the other at the feet, like the cherubim at each end of the ark. The angels asked her, Why she wept. She answered, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus

thus said, she turned back, and saw Jesus standing, who asked her the same question. She, supposing him to be the gardener, begged of him to tell her whether he had removed the body, that she might take care of it. Jesus, to recompense her for her solicitude concerning him, called her by name: upon which she immediately knew him, and in a transport of joy cried out, Rabboni ! my Master ! Jesus told her to go to his brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. Mary, in obedience to the command, went and told the disciples, that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her ; but they believed her not.

Maria. To whom did our Lord appear next ?

Aunt. To the other women, who had been at the sepulchre with the spices, addressing them by the salutation then in use, All hail ! upon which they fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. Jesus bade them fear nothing, but go and tell his brethren that they should see him in Galilee. The same day, as two of his disciples were walking to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, conversing about the transactions that had so lately taken place, Jesus himself overtook them.

Maria. How rejoiced they must be to see the Lord !

Aunt. Our Lord did not think proper immediately to make himself known, but begun conversing with them, enquiring why they appeared so sorrowful. One of them, whose name was Cleophas, replied, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which have so lately taken place? He asked, What things? They answered, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people; whom the chief priests and governors have delivered to death; but we trusted that it was He who should have redeemed Israel. Now this is the third day since these things were done; and, besides all this, we heard from some women of our own company, who were early at the sepulchre this morning, that they had seen a vision of angels, who informed them that he was alive: this was confirmed by some of us who went to the sepulchre, and found all things as the women had said, but him they saw not. Our Lord then rebuked them for their unbelief, saying unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things before he entered into his glory? Then, beginning at Moses, and going through the prophets, he explained the types and prophecies concerning himself. When they came to the village, our Lord made as though he would have gone further,

ther, but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening. He readily complied with their request: and as he sat at meat, he took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. Upon this, their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight, or ceased to be seen of them.

George. What did they think of his disappearing so suddenly?

Aunt. Their minds did not dwell upon that; but, in astonishment they said, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures, and talked to us by the way. And they rose up that same hour to go to Jerusalem to communicate the joyful tidings. There they found the apostles, and others with them. They then told them that the Lord was indeed risen, and had appeared to Simon; and while they were relating how the Lord conversed with them by the way, and was made known to them in breaking of bread, Jesus himself stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.

Maria. What joy this must cause!

Aunt. It seems at first to have occasioned very different sensations, for they were terrified and affrighted, supposing they had seen a spirit; but Jesus, to calm the tumult of their minds, assured them that

it

it was he himself; bidding them look at his wounded hands and feet; giving them leave to handle him, saying, that a spirit had not flesh and bones. They were now so transported with joy and wonder, they could scarcely believe the truth of what they saw, till Jesus asked them whether they had any meat; upon which they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honey-comb: and he did eat before them all. Then, as Mark relates, he reprov'd them for their unbelief, in not giving credit to those who had already seen him, declaring that what they now saw he had told them before; that all things must be accomplished that had been written in the law and the prophets, and in the psalms: then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

You see, my dears, that whatever advantages you may have in the company and instruction of serious and pious friends, you may remain ignorant as to the spiritual meaning of things; for even the disciples, who had been taught by Jesus, could not receive his word in the spirituality of it, till he opened their understandings. Pray then to the Lord to open and enlarge the faculties of your minds, that you may understand the things concerning him; that your eyes may be opened, that you may see Jesus, as your Lord and your God.

Our blessed Lord then gave his apostles a commission

mission to go and preach repentance and remission of sins in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. All this took place on the first day of the week, which, in honour of the resurrection, is kept as the sabbath by christians.

George. Did our Lord appear to them after this ?

Aunt. He did ; but we cannot proceed any farther at present.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XV.

George. **P**RAY, aunt, did all the apostles see Jesus on the first day?

Aunt. No; for, on some occasion or other, Thomas had absented himself from the rest. Upon his return, they told him that they had seen the Lord; but he declared he would not believe it, except he saw in his hands the very holes made by the nails, and thrust his finger into them, and also his hand into his side.

Lucy. I am amazed that Thomas should discredit the assertions of all his brethren.

Aunt. The Lord overruled the infidelity of his disciples to establish the certainty of his resurrection.

George. But how long was it before our Lord appeared again?

Aunt. Not till the first day of the next week, which was a second establishment of that day for the christian sabbath. The apostles were met in the same place, the doors being shut, when our Lord stood in the midst of them, and saluted them with, Peace be unto you.

you. Thomas being present, Jesus said unto him; Reach hither thy finger, and examine my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas, in astonishment, cried out, My Lord and my God! Jesus said, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Shortly after, the apostles left Jerusalem, and returned to Galilee. When they arrived on the bank of the sea of Tiberias, Peter proposed to go a fishing; and there were six more with him.

George. Pray, aunt, do you know their names?

Aunt. Two of them are not named; but, besides Peter, there were Thomas, James, John and Nathaniel; but they met with no success; for, during the whole night, they caught nothing. In the morning, a person on the shore said unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered, No. He told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they should find. They cast in the net, and immediately inclosed such a multitude of fishes, that they were not able to draw it up. John, in amazement, said to Peter, It is the Lord. Peter immediately flung himself into the sea, and swam ashore.

George. What did the other disciples do?

Aunt. With much difficulty they drew the vessel
to

to shore, dragging the net with fishes. Upon landing, they beheld another miracle; they saw a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus ordered them to bring the fish which they had caught. Peter, accordingly, drew the net to land. It contained a hundred and fifty-three large fishes, and yet the net was not broken. Jesus then invited them to dine with him: they complied without asking any questions, knowing him to be the Lord. He then took bread and fish, and distributed to them. Dinner being ended, Jesus addressed himself to Peter, saying, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He put the question a second time, and received the same answer; but when he put it a third time, Peter was grieved, and said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith, Feed my sheep.

Lucy. Did our Lord intend by this to bring to his mind his sin in denying him?

Aunt. He was pleased to take this method to manifest his affection to Peter, in that, as he had thrice denied him, he would draw from him a triple testimony of his love. Our Lord then gave him a hint of the difficulties he was to encounter, and by what death he was to glorify God. This was the third time

time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples. Not long after this, our Lord appointed a solemn meeting for the whole multitude of his Galilean and other disciples, upon a mountain in Galilee.

Maria. I should like to know how many attended.

Aunt. About five hundred brethren, as Paul tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 6. In the presence of this large assembly our Lord gave the commission to his apostles, to go and preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things that he had commanded them.

George. But how were they to make the nations, who spake different languages, understand them?

Aunt. Our Lord promised to endue them with qualifications suited to the work, such as speaking with new tongues (that is, in foreign languages), and working miracles: then, assuring them of his continual protection, he promised that he would be with them, even to the end of the world.

Maria. But they have not lived to the end of the world.

Aunt. True; but God has always had a people, and will have to the end of time; and to them the promise belongs: for no prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation, 2 Peter i. 20. Our Lord

con-

continued with his disciples forty days after his resurrection; at the close of which period, according to the orders they had received from him, they returned to Jerusalem, and assembled together privately. Our Lord, coming to them the last day he was on earth, told them not to depart from Jerusalem, till they had received the promise of God, and were invested with power from on high; for John baptized with water, but they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Now the time being come, in which Jesus should be glorified, and exalted above every creature in heaven and earth, he led the company out of the city, to that part of mount Olivet which was near Bethany, where, lifting up his hands which bore the marks of his sufferings, he blessed them; and, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Thus was he carried in the most triumphant manner into the ineffable glories of heaven. I think David had a prophetic view of this transaction, Psalm xxiv. 7—10. It seems as if his soul was elated with the view of his ascending Lord, and he heard the triumphant shouts of the attendant angels, crying out as they rose, Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. And those within enquiring, Who is this King of glory? They answer, The
 -1003 3 Lord,

Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle : lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Upon his entry into his kingdom, we may suppose, all the heavenly hosts saluted him with shouting, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. See Rev. v. 12, 13.

We have now, my dear children, gone through the history of our blessed Lord and Saviour, in which you are deeply interested ; for the gospel he came to promulgate, and which you have in your hands, will be unto you, either the favour of life unto life, or of death unto death. I have informed you that the Jewish dispensation consisted in types and shadows, which were all accomplished in Christ ; and, having no further signification, were to be superseded by a more evangelical state and church, in which the believer might have free access to God in Christ.

We are now brought, in the continuation of the history, to the Acts of the Apostles, which relates

the performance of many of those things that our Lord had foretold should take place. We have likewise an account of the success of the gospel, and the formation of the churches. We shall enter on this subject at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XVI.

Maria. **P**RAY, aunt, where did we leave the disciples in our last conversation?

Aunt. On mount Olivet, looking with astonished and desiring eyes after their ascending Lord, when two men in white apparel thus addressed them, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. They then returned to Jerusalem, and spent much time together in prayer: the assembly usually consisted of one hundred and twenty persons. There were now only eleven apostles; but, upon a proposition made by Peter, they set apart Joseph, surnamed Barnabas, and Matthias, two of the seventy, that one might be chosen in the place of Judas; and then praying, they cast lots; and the lot fell on Matthias, who was numbered with the apostles. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

George. Pray, aunt, what is the meaning of Pentecost?

Aunt. The word signifies the fiftieth day, and refers to a festival which the Jews were commanded to keep, called the Feast of Weeks. See Lev. xxiii. 15, 16. Deut. xvi. 9, 10. It was also exactly fifty days from our Lord's resurrection, and the first day of the week, when they were all assembled. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting: and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, which sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues; that is, they conversed in all the different languages then spoken.

There were at this time devout Jews from all nations assembled at Jerusalem on account of the feast. The wonderful appearance of tongues, like as of fire, sitting on each of them, was soon reported in the city, and the people came in multitudes to see this great sight. The apostles addressed each in his own language, which filled them all with wonder and surprise. The strangers perfectly understood the discourses; and were fully satisfied of the reality of the miracle; but others (probably the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, who did not understand any foreign language, and were more prejudiced against the disciples of Jesus than the strangers were) derid-

ed them, and, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine; supposing they uttered unmeaning sounds in a confused manner, as if they were speaking in another language.. But Peter, standing up, and raising his voice, declared unto them, that what they had seen and heard, so far from being the effects of wine, as they foolishly supposed, was a remarkable accomplishment of what God had foretold by the prophet Joel, concerning the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days. He then proceeded to show, in a speech of considerable length, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they with wicked hands had crucified and slain, was no other than the Messiah, of whose resurrection David had spoken so clearly in the Psalms. This Jesus, said Peter, hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear: let all the house of Israel, therefore, know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? to which Peter replied, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,

and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day, there were added unto them three thousand souls who continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine.

Maria. Did they immediately build churches?

Aunt. No, my dear.

Maria. But they must have one church; for it is said, there were numbers daily added to the church.

Aunt. The church of Christ does not consist in an outward building: it is an assembly of christians uniting together in christian fellowship; it matters not what the building may be called, whether Church, Chapel, or Meeting-house: however christians may differ in modes and forms of worship, if their faith and practice are according to the word of God, they will meet above, where there will be no difference of opinion to hinder their union; but they will be all of one heart and one mind.

George. What was the first miracle wrought by the apostles?

Aunt. That of curing a lame man, who sat at the gate of the temple, called Beautiful, begging. He asked alms of Peter and John. Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the hand, and lift him up:

up : and he stood, and walked, entering with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God. And the people came from all quarters to see him, being filled with astonishment. Peter, observing their amazement, thus addressed them, Why look ye so earnestly on us, as if by our own power or holiness, we had restored this man. Peter then preached Christ to them, declaring that it was by faith in his name, they wrought this miracle. Thus the apostles sowed the seed, and God gave the increase : for there were added to the church five thousand.

Maria. Did they persecute the apostles as they did our Lord?

Aunt. Their malice was the same, and this miracle, together with their preaching Christ to the people, was the occasion of exciting it afresh. The priests and sadducees, with the captain or ruler of the temple, came, and took Peter and John, and put them in prison. The next morning the apostles were brought before the sanhedrim, and the whole examination was reduced to one single question. By what power and by whose name have ye restored this lame man?

George. I think the question implies that they were not ignorant how the miracle was wrought.

Aunt. You are certainly right, George ; but they hoped

hoped to have made the apostles disown it through fear, and so have weakened the faith of the new converts. But Peter, being assisted by the Holy Ghost, according to our Lord's promise in such cases, made a most noble defence, declaring boldly, That it was by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead, that that man stood before them; assuring them, there was salvation only in Christ, for there was no other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved.

When Peter had finished, the rulers commanded the apostles to withdraw; and conferred among themselves, what they should do with them; they agreed, that they could not deny the miracle, for it was manifest to all that dwelt at Jerusalem; they therefore concluded to threaten the apostles, and dismiss them, charging them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Maria. When the apostles were ordered in again, what answer did they give?

Aunt. Peter and John said, Judge ye; whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, for we cannot but speak the things we have heard and seen. After being further threatened, they were dismissed without any punishment. They then returned to their own company,
to

to whom they reported what the elders and chief priests had said unto them; upon which they all joined in solemn prayer to God; and, as a token that their prayer was heard, the place was shaken where they were assembled; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word with all boldness. The believers were so united in sentiment and affection, that they are said to have been of one heart and one soul: those that were rich sold their houses and lands, and brought the money to the apostles, who made distribution to every one according to their necessities.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira you well know: they wanted to appear as pious and well disposed as others, but God who knows the secret reserve of every heart, detected them, and made them an awful example of divine justice. May you, my dear children, detest dissimulation which leads to lying: for though there are none who have the power of immediately discerning the heart, as the apostles had on certain occasions, yet, remember that God sees you, and that no lie which can be told can be kept secret from his all-searching eye; for though liars are not immediately struck dead as Ananias and Sapphira were, yet, if they do not repent, they will ere long have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.

George

George. What other miracles did the apostles perform?

Aunt. They wrought a great many, the particulars of which are not specified: we are only told in general terms, that the people brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least, the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them: there came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick persons and those that were possessed: and they were healed every one. Thus accomplishing what our Lord promised, John xiv. 12, That they should do greater works than his. These miraculous cures excited great veneration in the people for the apostles, and tended to enlarge the kingdom of Christ: for there were numbers added to the church daily.

Lucy. What notice did the high priest and his associates take of the apostles continuing to preach?

Aunt. They were filled with indignation that their late prohibition was disregarded by the apostles; and they seized on them, and cast them into the common prison; but the Lord demonstrated that he had all power in heaven and earth. He that has the keys of death and hell, can unlock prisons when he pleases; for he sent his angel, who opened the prison doors, and

and set them at liberty, ordering them to go into the temple, and preach the words of eternal life.

Early in the morning, the apostles went into the temple, and taught the people. The high priest, not knowing of their escape, sent officers to bring them before the council; who, when they returned, reported that all was quiet in the prison, the guards on the watch, and the doors shut, but no man within. The sanhedrim, upon hearing this, were filled with consternation; but one coming in, and telling them that the apostles were preaching in the temple, they immediately sent officers to apprehend them. When they were brought before the council, the high priest accused them of filling Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ, intending to bring his blood upon them. The apostles' defence, though pious and prudent, so enraged the high priest and the rest of the rulers, that they at first took the resolution to put them to death.

Maria. And what diverted them from their purpose?

Aunt. One of their own council, a doctor of the law and a pharisee, a man of reputation in the city, whose name was Gamaliel, ordered the apostles to be put forth a little, and then advised the council to be cautious how they proceeded against those men; reminding them of false pretenders, that had arisen,

who, with their followers, had perished; adding, that if this work was of men, it would come to nought, but, if it was of God, they could not overthrow it; for, in that case, they would be found fighting against God. The force of these reasonings so far prevailed, that they changed the sentence of death for that of scourging; and then dismissed them, with a repetition of the former injunction. The apostles departed rejoicing, not that they had escaped death, but that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of their dear Lord and Master, whose gospel they still continued to preach.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XVII.

Lucy. **W**HEN I came to reflect on our last conversation, I was astonished to think of the many thousands, who had believed in Jesus in so very short a space of time.

Aunt. And they continued daily to increase, so that the apostles found it necessary to choose deacons; whose office should be, to take care of the church's stock, to distribute to the poor, visit the sick, and attend to all the civil affairs of the church. They chose seven: their names were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas.

Stephen very much contributed to the progress of the gospel, being filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; and he did great wonders, and miracles. His zeal and diligence soon provoked the malice of the Jews, who selected the most learned men to dispute with him, out of the synagogues of the Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, so named from the persons who founded them, or the places in which they were built. When they found that these men could

not overcome him by argument, they hired false witnesses to testify that he had spoken blasphemous words against the holy place and the law: and they brought him before the council. As Moses' face shone when he came down from the mount of God, so did this holy man's before his accusers; for his face was like that of an angel. Being permitted to speak for himself, he took occasion, in a full historical deduction, to point out the treatment which the prophets and holy men of old had invariably received from their fathers; and was proceeding in the application, when, their consciences being stung by the severe truths he had uttered, they fell into the utmost rage and fury; but, amidst all this tumult, Stephen was favoured with a divine prospect of the glory of heaven, and, in a transport, cried out, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. This so exasperated the Jews, that they immediately raised a great noise and clamour, and, rushing upon him with one accord, hurried him out of the city, and stoned him. While the stones were showering down on this holy man, he was calling upon God, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Maria. I should not like such a sleep as that.

Aunt. Sleep, my dear, is a beautiful emblem of death. After a day of pain and toil, how welcome is sleep ! though it is the image of death, instead of shrinking from it, we gladly embrace it, in a firm belief we shall awake again : so the christian, with the prospect of heaven before him, lies down in the arms of death, satisfied that he shall awake with God.

Lucy. Did any of the christians desert the cause of Christ through fear ?

Aunt. We have no account that any one did ; though a dreadful persecution ensued, and the most active person in it was Saul, who was born in a Roman city, called Tarsus in Cilicia, about three hundred miles from Jerusalem, by which he was entitled to the privilege of a free citizen of Rome.

George. Then he was not a Jew.

Aunt. Yes, he was ; a Hebrew of the Hebrews ; both his parents being Jews, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was brought up to the occupation of tent-making : he was also a pupil under the great Gamaliel, and one of the most zealous of the sect of the pharisees. Now this man made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women to prison.

Maria. How this must stop the progress of christianity !

Aunt. On the contrary, it proved the means of its spreading; for hitherto the preaching of the gospel had been confined to Jerusalem; but the persecution was so severe, that it dispersed, in a great measure, the whole body of the church, and drove many into foreign countries. Some went into the regions of Judea and Samaria; others to Phoenicia; Cyprus, and Antioch. Andronicus and Junia, who were of note among the saints, and relations of the persecutor Saul; (whom he afterwards mentions in Rom. xvi. 7, as having embraced the faith before him,) went, it is supposed, as far as Rome; but in whatever direction they fled, they proclaimed the joyful tidings of the gospel.

George. Did the apostles leave Jerusalem?

Aunt. No; as pillars of the church, they continued in their stations, till they were called thence of God. Philip, one of the deacons, went to Samaria, where he preached Christ, and wrought miracles in his name, curing diseases, and casting out impure spirits. And the city was filled with joy, and those who believed were baptized, both men and women. Among the rest, one Simon, a forcerer, commonly called Simon Magus, became a believer, and was baptized. And he continued with Philip, wondering, when he beheld the miracles which were wrought.

When

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John, who, when they arrived, prayed for them, and laid their hands on them; and they immediately received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. Simon the magician, observing that a power of working miracles, and speaking with tongues, was conveyed by the laying on of hands, offered money to the apostles, saying, Give me this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

Maria. Was he struck dead, as Ananias was? for surely it was a very wicked thought!

Aunt. God has a sovereign right either to spare or punish immediately as he sees fit, or to extend pardon to the most rebellious. Peter gave Simon a severe rebuke, saying, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought to purchase the gift of God with money: thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

George. Was it impossible that he should be forgiven?

Aunt. Peter did not absolutely say so; for he exhorted him to repent, if, perhaps, the thought of his heart might be forgiven.

Maria. Did he repent?

Aunt. We have no account that he did: on the contrary, ecclesiastical history describes him as a chief propagator of error as long as he lived. The apostles returned to Jerusalem, after having preached the word of God in many villages of Samaria.

George. Then Philip continued at Samaria.

Aunt. He did, till God commanded him to arise and go towards the South, into a desert country between Jerusalem and Gaza. He immediately obeyed, and, arriving at the place, observed a foreign nobleman sitting in his chariot. He was a eunuch of great authority, and chief treasurer to Candace, queen of Ethiopia: being a Jewish proselyte, he had been to Jerusalem to worship, probably at the feast of tabernacles. By the impulse of the spirit, Philip joined the chariot, and found him devoutly reading that scripture, Isaiah liii. 7, He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. Philip asked him if he understood the passage. He frankly acknowledged he did not, but expressed a desire to be instructed, and invited Philip to come into the chariot. He then asked him, whether the prophet spake this of himself, or of some other person. Philip immediately explained it to him, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ powerfully and effectually: then, coming to a place where there was water, the eunuch said,

See,

See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest: to which he answered, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both of them into the water; and Philip baptized him.

Maria. Did Philip go with him to Ethiopia?

Aunt. They were no sooner come up out of the water, than Philip was conveyed away by the Spirit of the Lord; and the eunuch saw him no more. He was afterwards found at Azotus, whence he travelled to Cæsarea, preaching in all the cities through which he passed.

George. It must make the eunuch very sorrowful, to lose his friend so soon.

Aunt. But he had found an inestimable treasure in Christ, which afforded him such satisfaction and delight, that he went on his way rejoicing. Here is a lesson of instruction for you, my dear children, if you do not understand all you read in the scripture, to apply to those who have been taught of God to explain it to you; that your errors may be corrected, and your doubts removed.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XVIII.

George. DID Saul continue his persecution all this time?

Aunt. He did, with unremitting zeal; for when he found that the dispersion of the believers tended to the propagation of the gospel, he was the more enraged: and, as the power of the great sanhedrim extended to all the Jewish synagogues in the remotest parts, he procured letters of commission from them, to go to Damascus, the metropolis, or chief city, of Coelo-Syria, situated about one hundred and sixty miles, north-east of Jerusalem; in order that if he found any professing Christ, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem, to be punished.

Maria. Then the believers could have no other resource than to flee from city to city.

Aunt. But the Almighty prevented it, by stopping him in his mad career: for when he was come nigh to Damascus, suddenly there shone round about him a light from heaven: and he fell prostrate with fear. In this situation, he heard a voice, saying unto him,
Saul,

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Lord, who art thou? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Our Lord mercifully bade him arise and go into the city, and it should be told him what he should do.

Lucy. Did the men who were with him see the vision?

Aunt. They heard a voice, but saw no man. And when Saul arose from the earth, he had lost his eyesight, and was led by the hand into Damascus; where he continued three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

Lucy. He was in a pitiable situation at this time.

Aunt. The Lord took compassion on him, and, to send him relief, appeared in a vision to Ananias, an established disciple, commanding him to go into the city, and enquire for one Saul of Tarsus, who was in the house of Judas. Ananias, startled at the name, said, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to the saints at Jerusalem, and that he is come here, with authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call upon thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles; and I will shew him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Ananias immediately

ately repaired to the house, and, laying his hands upon Saul, called him brother, and declared to him, that the Lord Jesus, the same who appeared to him in his journey, had sent him, that he might recover his sight, and be filled with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And immediately he received sight, and arose, and was baptized: and when he had taken meat he was strengthened.

Maria. Did he preach at Damascus?

Aunt. He hesitated not, but straightway preached, in the synagogues; declaring, with all boldness, that Christ was the Son of God.

Lucy. How surprised the people must be!

Aunt. They were; and said, Is not this he who destroyed them that called on this name at Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent. But Saul confounded the Jews at Damascus, proving Jesus to be very Christ.

It appears, by the epistle of Paul to the Galatians, chap. i. 17, 18, that he went almost immediately after his conversion into Arabia, where he continued two or three years, preaching the gospel; after which, he came again to Damascus.

George. How did the Jews treat him on his return?

Aunt. Their enmity to him was unabated. Upon hearing him preach again in the synagogues, they

they resolved upon his death, and accordingly lay in wait for him, watching the gates day and night, that he should not escape. But Saul had knowledge of their designs; and the disciples, who were as solicitous to preserve him, as his enemies were to destroy him, let him down in a basket from one of their houses over the city wall. Having thus escaped, he went to Jerusalem, to visit Peter and the church there.

George. No doubt but he was received with joy.

Aunt. Knowing his former temper and principles, they all shunned him, not believing him to be a disciple.

Maria. This must grieve him very much!

Aunt. A man of such keen sensibility must be sure to feel it. But this was soon removed by Barnabas, an eminent disciple, who brought him to Peter and James, acquainting them with his miraculous conversion, and his zealous preaching of Christ at Damascus, which removed all their doubts; and they admitted him to intimate communion with them. His sermons were so powerful, and his disputations with the Grecians so unanswerable, that here, as in Damascus, he met with many enemies, who eagerly sought his life.

Maria. What course did he pursue?

Aunt. Departing from Jerusalem, he set sail for his

his own city, Tarsus in Cilicia, and did not return till several years after. The churches had rest for some time, and increased and flourished, to the great comfort of the disciples.

Maria. Where did the other apostles go?

Aunt. It appears that Peter took a progress through Judea, and visited the saints which were at Lydda; where he found a man who had been afflicted with the palsy eight years. And he said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise and take thy bed. And he arose immediately. The knowledge of this miracle soon spread, and brought the inhabitants of Lydda, and Saron, a neighbouring town, to believe in Jesus.

George. Did Peter continue long there?

Aunt. No; he was intreated by the brethren at Joppa to come to them without delay, as they had sustained a great loss by the death of a pious and venerable woman, who was renowned for her good deeds. Peter immediately complied with their request. As soon as he arrived, they took him to the chamber of mourning, shewing him the clothing that Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas, had provided for the poor with her own hands, while she was with them. They durst not expressly petition him to raise her from the dead, but, by their lamentations, they testified their desires. Peter
put

put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed; then, turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up; and he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and presented her alive to the saints and widows. This was known throughout all Joppa: and many believed in the Lord.

Lucy. The character of Tabitha appears very amiable!

Aunt. I would recommend her conduct to your imitation. To spend your money and time in working for the poor, will afford you far greater pleasure than the vain amusements that many ladies follow to kill time, which hangs heavy on their hands, from their want of knowing how to employ it properly. Peter, abode a considerable time at Joppa, probably a year, lodging in the house of one Simon, a tanner.

Lucy. I think the apostles continued to preach to the Jews only.

Aunt. It was now seven years since the ascension of our Lord, and they had not yet fully understood the commission, Go, preach to all nations. They had been in the provinces and remote countries, wherever the Jews resided, and met with great success; but now God thought fit to open a door to the Gentiles, and to make the Jews sensible that the

partition wall was thrown down, and that they were no longer a peculiar people.

Cæsarea was a city inhabited both by Jews and Gentiles, and the most frequent residence of the Roman governors of Judea : at this time the Italian band kept garrison in the city. The centurion, or captain, was a Roman, named Cornelius. This man was devout, and feared God with all his house. He was one that communicated of his substance to the poor, and prayed to God always. While he was praying, he saw in a vision an angel of God coming to him, and saying, Cornelius : and he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord ? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God : send now to Joppa, to Simon Peter, and he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. The angel further directed him to the very house where Peter lodged. He accordingly called two Servants and a devout soldier that waited on him ; and, when he had related to them what he had seen, he sent them to Joppa.

In the mean time, God was preparing the mind of Peter for their reception. Peter retired about the sixth hour unto the house-top to pray. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten ; but, while they made ready, he fell into a trance. And he saw heaven opened, and a vessel let down, in which
were

were all sorts of beasts, birds, and reptiles, both clean and unclean. And there came a voice, saying, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. He startled at this, and replied, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing common or unclean. And the voice spake again, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice, and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Lucy. What could Peter understand by this vision?

Aunt. While he was revolving in his mind what this could mean, the three men arrived, and enquired for him. And the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee: arise therefore, get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to them, and said, I am he whom ye seek; wherefore are ye come? Upon this, they gave a full relation of what had happened to Cornelius. Peter courteously lodged them that night, and the next day set off with them, being accompanied by some of the brethren.

George. No doubt but Cornelius waited with eager expectation for Peter's arrival.

Aunt. He had assembled his kinsfolk and friends, that they, with him, might hear the good things which were to be communicated. As soon as he saw Peter, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him;

but Peter took him up, saying, Stand up, I myself also am a man. And he went in with him.

Seeing the company that were assembled, Peter thus addressed them, Ye know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with the people of any other nation; but, having been taught of God not to call any man common or unclean, I am come unto you, and desire to know for what intent ye have sent for me? Cornelius then gave him an account of the vision which he had seen. Peter replied, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. He then preached Jesus to them, and concluded with these words; To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins.

While Peter thus spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word; and they spoke with tongues and magnified God. When Peter saw the gentiles thus baptized with the Holy Ghost, of which the baptism of water was but a type, he said to them that were with him, Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they intreated Peter to stay with them certain days.

and began to show him how all things were fulfilled in him. *George.*

George. It must rejoice the rest of the apostles to hear these glad tidings !

Aunt. They were offended with Peter for preaching to the Gentiles, till he went up to Jerusalem, when he related the whole affair to them from the beginning ; and concluded with saying, As God gave unto them the like gifts that he did unto us, what was I that I could withstand God ?

Maria. What did they say to this ?

Aunt. They were perfectly satisfied, and glorified God for admitting the gentiles to be sharers in the privileges of the gospel.

DIALOGUE XIX.

Aunt. **SOME** disciples born in Cyprus and Cyrene, who, since the death of Stephen, had preached the gospel in various parts, now arrived at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, and preached Jesus to the inhabitants of that great city; in consequence of which, many believed and turned to the Lord. When these tidings reached Jerusalem, the church sent Barnabas, a man full of faith and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and many more were added to the Lord.

Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul, that he might have his assistance in this great undertaking. Saul readily consented to return with him to Antioch, where they continued together preaching the gospel with extraordinary success. It was in this city they first obtained the honourable name of Christians, which soon spread, and, in a short time, prevailed all over the world. This was about ten years after our Lord's ascension.

Lucy. What was the general name by which they were called before this time?

Aunt.

Aunt. Nazarenes and Galileans by the Jews; but, among themselves, Disciples, Believers, Saints, and Brethren. In the same year, came certain persons, endowed with the gift of prophecy, from Jerusalem to Antioch; one of whom, named Agabus, foretold, by the Spirit of God, that there should be a great famine in many parts of the world.

Maria. This would give the christians an opportunity to provide against it; but how long was it before it came to pass?

Aunt. In the following year. The christians at Antioch made a collection for their brethren in Judea, which they sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Before their arrival, king Herod Agrippa had killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; and, seeing it pleased the Jews, he apprehended Peter also, whom he committed to prison; delivering him to four quaternions of soldiers, or sixteen, to guard him, four at a time, according to the watches of the night; designing, after the feast of the passover, to bring him forth to the Jews, to have him executed.

George. Did the christians take any steps to deliver him?

Aunt. They made use of means which proved effectual.

George. Did they intercede with the king?

Aunt.

Aunt. No; but they prayed without ceasing to the God of heaven, who is King of kings: and he sent his angel, who came to the prison, and a light shined therein. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound, with a chain on each hand, to the two soldiers between whom he lay; but did not awake till the angel gently struck him on the side, and raised him up; upon which his chains fell off. He then bid him gird on his coat and follow him. Neither the light which was in the prison, nor the voice of the angel, nor the falling of the chains, disturbed the soldiers. Peter followed the angel, and having passed the first and second guard, when they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, its strong bars and bolts gave way, and it opened of its own accord. When the angel had led Peter out of the reach of his keepers, into a part of the city which he knew, he departed.

Lucy. It must have appeared like a dream to Peter.

Aunt. He, for a time, thought it a vision; but when he became sensible of the reality of it, by finding himself in the city, he praised the Lord, who had sent his angel to deliver him: and, that he might comfort the christians, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark. When he had knocked at the door, a damsel came to
ask

ask who was there : hearing Peter's voice, she opened not the door for gladness, but ran, and told how Peter stood without. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she affirmed that it was even so. All this while, Peter continued knocking : and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. He then related to them how the Lord had delivered him, desiring them to acquaint James and the brethren : and he departed to another place.

Maria. I thought James was slain.

Aunt. You have forgot, my dear, that there were two apostles of that name. This was James the son of Alphaeus, who wrote the epistle, entitled, The General Epistle of James.

George. What consternation the soldiers must be in at Peter's escape!

Aunt. The king, in a rage, commanded them to be put to death ; and departed from Jerusalem to Cæsarea. He was himself soon after struck with death in a public assembly ; but you shall have a more full account of that in the Jewish history. Paul and Barnabas, having disposed of their contributions to the christians in Judea, returned to Antioch, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Lucy. Was that Mark the evangelist ?

Aunt. No ; he was nephew to Barnabas.

George. Did they make a long stay at Antioch ?

Aunt.

Aunt. It appears not; for, by the particular direction of God, Saul and Barnabas were set apart for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the gentiles: and they went to the famous island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean sea. In Salamis, one of the chief cities of the isle, they began their ministry; and, though they were principally sent to the gentiles, yet they usually went into the synagogues, and preached Christ first to the Jews. The apostles, passing through the isle, arrived at Paphos, a large city on the western parts, the seat of the Roman Proconsul, or governor of the isle, whose name was Sergius Paulus, a man of great wisdom and prudence. Having called for Saul and Barnabas, he desired to hear the word of God: but a Jewish forcerer, named Barjesus, or Elymas, opposed the apostles, and used all methods to divert Sergius Paulus from the belief of Christ. Saul, with a holy indignation, set his eyes upon him, and said, O full of subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness! wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind for a season. This immediately took place; and he sought for some to lead him.

Maria. What effect had this on the governor?

Aunt. It filled him with astonishment, and he believed

heved in the Lord. From this time, Saul was always called Paul, a name probably given him by the household of Sergius Paulus. Paul removed with all his company, and, leaving Cyprus, sailed to Perga, in Pamphilia, a province or country in the lesser Asia, north-west of Cyprus.

The apostles staid not long at Perga, but travelled seventy or eighty miles northward, to a city called Antioch, the metropolis of Pisidia, another province of the lesser Asia.

George. What reception did they meet with there?

Aunt. On the sabbath-day they went into the synagogue; and when the law and the prophets had been read, the rulers said, Men and brethren, have ye any word of exhortation for the people?

George. This was a charming opening for them.

Aunt. And Paul availed himself of it, in a very animated discourse, which I would have you read when you return home. You will find it in Acts xiii. 16 to 41. This sermon had a double effect: the gentiles, who were entirely unacquainted with revealed religion, desired further information on the following sabbath; and the Jews, who waited for redemption in Israel, with the proselytes of the gate, believed, and followed Paul and Barnabas, who exhorted them to continue in the grace of God. The next sabbath almost all the city came together to hear the word of God, which stirred up the envy of the un-

unbelieving Jews, who contradicted and spake evil of those things which Paul had said.

Maria. How very wicked! and how trying it must be to Paul!

Aunt. It made both him and Barnabas the more zealous: and he told them, it was necessary the gospel should be preached first to them; but as they had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, they would turn to the gentiles. Thus all who reject or turn their backs upon the gospel render themselves unworthy of eternal life.

George. But how did the gentiles receive it?

Aunt. When they found that Christ was to be a light unto the gentiles, and that his salvation should extend to the utmost bounds of the world, they magnified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. The apostles preached also in the neighbouring country with success: but the Jews stirred up the honourable women, and the chief men of the city, who raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their coasts.

They then went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, another province of the lesser Asia; and though they had experienced such ill treatment from the Jews in all places, yet their desire for their salvation made them continue their former practice, of first going

going into the synagogues; which, in this place, was attended with success, both to Jews and Gentiles. The number of converts encouraged them to make some stay in this city, confirming the doctrines which they taught by signs and wonders: yet there remained many unbelieving Jews, who excited the Gentiles against them; and the multitude of the city was divided; part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. The Jews, with their rulers, resolved to have them stoned to death; but the apostles, being aware of it, fled to the next cities of the same province, Lystra and Derbe, and to the adjacent parts. At Lystra there was a lame man, who had never walked, having been a cripple from his birth. The same heard Paul speak. Perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Paul said unto him, Stand upright on thy feet; and immediately the cure was effected; and he leaped, and walked.

Lucy. It was happy for him that he attended.

Aunt. It was, my dear. But the people, when they saw the miracle that was wrought, cried out, in their own language, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. Barnabas they called Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker: according to the idolatrous worship of those times, they proceeded to offer sacrifices to them;

and the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands for that purpose.

George. What could the apostles do?

Aunt. In token of their abhorrence of this idolatrous attempt, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? we are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God. With these words they could scarcely restrain the people.

Lucy. Though they ought not to have worshipped them, yet they might have retained a lasting veneration for them.

Aunt. But their conduct, my dear, shews us the instability of human nature, and to what extremes men will run; for, shortly after, these very people, by the instigation of some Jews who had seen Paul at Antioch and Iconium, took him and stoned him, and drew him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Maria. What must the disciples and Barnabas feel on this occasion!

Aunt. As they were standing round about him, to their unspeakable joy, he revived, and went into the city. The next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the gospel; and many were converted. Then, returning back through all the cities where

where they had before preached, and ordaining elders in every church, they finished the whole circuit of their ministry; and came by shipping to Antioch in Syria, where, having assembled the church, they rehearsed all that God had done by them, and how he had opened a door to the Gentiles.

Q2

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XX.

George. **P**RAY, aunt, where did we leave Paul and Barnabas ?

Aunt. At Antioch, where they abode a long time : but some dissensions arose in the church concerning the Mosaic institutions, which occasioned Paul and Barnabas to go to Jerusalem, to consult with the apostles and elders on this matter : and when they had settled the points debated upon, they wrote letters to the gentile churches, and sent them by Paul and Barnabas, with Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren ; who, arriving at Antioch in Syria, gathered the church together, and delivered the epistle, which when they had read they rejoiced. Paul and Barnabas continued at Antioch, preaching the word of the Lord. After some time, Paul proposed to Barnabas, to visit the churches in every city. To this Barnabas acceded, but determined to take with him John Mark, to whom Paul objected, as he had before left them, when at Pamphylia. The contention was so sharp as to part these fellow-labourers in the gospel.

Lucy. This confirms what Paul observed on another

ther occasion, that they were men of like passions with others.

Aunt. But it ought to teach us to watch and pray ; for, if the apostles, with all their advantages, were subject to infirmities, how much more are we. Barnabas took Mark with him, and sailed to Cyprus ; and Paul chose Silas, and went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. Coming to Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia, cities he had preached in two or three years before, he met with a young man, named Timothy, whose father was a Grecian, but his mother Eunice was a Jewess, by whom he had, from a child, been instructed in the holy scriptures ; in which he had attained such extraordinary knowledge, and was so highly esteemed by the brethren, that Paul took him to be his companion in his travels, and had such an affection for him, that he called him his beloved son, in the epistles which he afterwards wrote to him. Happy are those children, who have such a mother as Eunice, who employs her care and attention in cultivating their understanding, leading them to the Bible, the fountain of all knowledge, which unfolds the wisdom of God in redemption, and the unsearchable riches there are in Christ Jesus ; that by faith in him they may be made partakers of these inestimable blessings, and heirs of everlasting bliss.

Maria. But how old must they be before they can understand these things?

Aunt. As soon as a child knows right from wrong, which is very early indeed, it may be instructed in divine things. I have had the pleasure of seeing more than one instance of it; some who are now living have astonished me by their depth of thought, and the questions which they have put from the age of three to six. If you should live to have children under your care, take the advantage of this early period, in which, if encouraged, they will thirst after knowledge,—will tell you all they think,—have no reserves,—will ask you where God lives,—why he does not speak to them,—whether he sees them; and a thousand little questions which give opportunity to instruct them, and correct wrong ideas; whereas a child, whose mind is uncultivated, will have as gross ideas of God, at seven, eight, or ten years of age, as one of three or four years; and you will not have the same advantage of instructing him.

Lucy. I cannot comprehend that, aunt, for the older children are, the better they can understand what is said to them.

Aunt. But a little simple question, put by a child of three years old, would give you pleasure, when the same question, put by one of ten, would disgust you: the child would perceive that, and consequently keep every

every thing to itself, for fear of betraying its ignorance: therefore knowledge could not then be so easily instilled; while the younger receives it imperceptibly.

Lucy. I heard a lady say, that, talking to children about religion was only making hypocrites of them; for you could not give them grace.

Aunt. I grant that we cannot give them grace; that is the gift of God alone: but, by following the command of God, in training them up in the way they should go, they are ready, when God imparts his grace, for any work which he shall please to employ them in, as young Timothy was. But we will return to our history.

When Paul, Silas, and Timothy had gone through Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to go either into Bithynia, or the lesser Asia.

Maria. Did they return to Jerusalem?

Aunt. No; they went down to Troas, a port in the Ægean sea, where Paul had a vision in the night; in which there appeared a man of Macedonia, inviting him to come and help them. From this vision he understood that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel in those parts. Accordingly, he and his companions sailed north-westward from Troas, and touching at Samothracia, an island not far from Thrace, the next day

day they landed at Neapolis, a port in Macedonia, and from thence they went a few miles to Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. Thus the gospel was introduced into Europe.

George. I think they staid in this place some time.

Aunt. They did; and Paul began his ministry in an oratory, or house of prayer, by the river's side, where the Jews used to worship. Some women being assembled, Paul spake to them; and it pleased the Lord to open the heart of one of them, named Lydia, to attend to the things spoken by Paul. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira: and she and all her household were baptized. She besought Paul and his companions to abide at her house, and by her importunity constrained them. It appears, as long as they continued in this city, they worshipped God in the same oratory. As they went to this place, a damsel met them in the way possessed with a spirit of divination, by which she brought much gain to her masters. She openly cried out, These men are the servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the way of salvation. And this she did many days. Paul, being grieved to see her, turned, and said to the evil spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. When her masters saw that the hope of their gains

gains was gone; they, in a rage, caught Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the market-place, to the magistrates.

Lucy. What accusation could they bring against them?

Aunt. That they were Jews, and taught customs which it was not lawful for them, as Romans, either to receive or observe. Upon this, the multitude rose up against them: and the magistrates commanded them to be beaten. After many stripes had been laid on them, they committed them to prison, with a charge to the jailor to keep them safely; upon which he unmercifully thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Maria. What an unhappy situation to be in!

Aunt. If the Lord be with us, we cannot be unhappy, whatever our external situation may be. The history before us affords an instance of rejoicing in tribulation. Paul and Silas were at this time suffering in their bodies, from the cruel scourging which had been inflicted upon them; yet their souls were so full of joy, that at midnight they burst out into songs of praise to God: and the prisoners heard them; when suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundation of the prison was shaken; immediately all the doors opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

George. Then they might all have escaped.

Aunt.

Aunt. But none offered to stir. The jailor, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, concluded the prisoners had made their escape, and drew his sword, with an intention to kill himself; which, Paul perceiving, cried out, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out of the dungeon, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? They did not cast any reflection on him for his cruel behaviour to them, but replied, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And they preached Christ to him, and to all that were in his house. The jailor, now solicitous for their care and comfort, washed their stripes, and set meat before them. He and his were straightway baptized: and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. The next day the magistrates sent the serjeants to inform the jailor he might let the prisoners go.

George. This must be joyful tidings!

Aunt. Paul acted with a dignity becoming his character, and his knowledge of the Roman laws. He said, They have beaten us uncondemned, being Romans, and cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily; nay, verily, let them come themselves, and fetch us out.

Lucy.

Lucy. I should have thought the magistrates would have been highly offended at this answer.

Aunt. They seem rather to have been intimidated, knowing the privilege of Roman citizens. Perceiving they had acted illegally, and were liable to prosecution for their conduct, they sent to the prison, and, with all submission, brought out Paul and Silas, and besought them to leave their city; which they did, after visiting the house of Lydia, and comforting the brethren. Thus the foundation was laid of an eminent church, as appears by Paul's epistle to the christians of this city.

Having left Philippi, they travelled westward, through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the metropolis of all Macedonia, about one hundred and twenty miles from Philippi. Here, in a synagogue of the Jews, Paul preached Christ unto them, for three successive sabbaths, which proved the means of the conversion of some of the Jews, and a multitude of the Grecians, who were proselytes of the gate, and not a few of the women of rank and quality.

Maria. Then I suppose they met with but little difficulty.

Aunt. Here, as in all other places, the unbelieving Jews put the city in an uproar, and, collecting a
4 number

number of disorderly fellows, assaulted the house of one Jason, where Paul and Silas resided; but, missing the object of their pursuit, they took Jason and some of the brethren to the rulers, and accused them of entertaining men that had turned the world upside down, acting contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, declaring there was another king, one Jesus.

Maria. What did the rulers do with them?

Aunt. They contented themselves with taking security of Jason and his companions, and let them go. And the brethren sent Paul and Silas away by night, unto Berea, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica.

Lucy. I think the apostles met with more opposition from the Jews than from the Gentiles.

Aunt. They did; but the people of Berea were more noble than those of Thessalonica, for they willingly received the word, and searched the scriptures, to see whether those things which Paul preached of the Messiah, were to be found therein; therefore many of them believed. From this we may see the advantage of diligent attention to the scriptures.

Lucy. They might tarry here without fear of molestation.

Aunt. But the malice of the Jews of Thessalonica soon extended to this place; for, on hearing that Paul preached at Berea, they came and stirred up the people;

people; but the brethren immediately sent Paul to the sea-side, as if he meant to go on ship-board, and then conducted him another way, near two hundred and forty miles southward, to the great city Athens; where Paul waited the arrival of Silas and Timothy, whom he had left at Berea.

Athens was once the metropolis of all Greece, and one of the most renowned cities in the world for arts and arms; and, though now declining, it was the principal city in the Roman empire for all kinds of polite learning. The inhabitants were remarkably superstitious, and so careful that no deity should want due honour, that they had an altar inscribed to the Unknown God. Paul, observing the city wholly given to idolatry, was deeply concerned to see so much devotion misplaced: he therefore disputed with the Jews and proselytes in the synagogues, and with the Athenians and foreigners in the market-place, where they spent their time in nothing else but in telling or hearing some new thing: and he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

Maria. How did they receive it?

Aunt. The philosophers treated him with scorn and contempt, as a setter forth of strange gods. And they took him to Areopagus, or Mars-hill, which was the highest court in the city, and desired him to inform them concerning this new doctrine.

number of disorderly fellows, assaulted the house of one Jason, where Paul and Silas resided; but, missing the object of their pursuit, they took Jason and some of the brethren to the rulers, and accused them of entertaining men that had turned the world upside down, acting contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, declaring there was another king, one Jesus.

Maria. What did the rulers do with them?

Aunt. They contented themselves with taking security of Jason and his companions, and let them go. And the brethren sent Paul and Silas away by night, unto Berea, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica.

Lucy. I think the apostles met with more opposition from the Jews than from the Gentiles.

Aunt. They did; but the people of Berea were more noble than those of Thessalonica, for they willingly received the word, and searched the scriptures, to see whether those things which Paul preached of the Messiah, were to be found therein; therefore many of them believed. From this we may see the advantage of diligent attention to the scriptures.

Lucy. They might tarry here without fear of molestation.

Aunt. But the malice of the Jews of Thessalonica soon extended to this place; for, on hearing that Paul preached at Berea, they came and stirred up the people;

people; but the brethren immediately sent Paul to the sea-side, as if he meant to go on ship-board, and then conducted him another way, near two hundred and forty miles southward, to the great city Athens; where Paul waited the arrival of Silas and Timothy, whom he had left at Berea.

Athens was once the metropolis of all Greece, and one of the most renowned cities in the world for arts and arms; and, though now declining, it was the principal city in the Roman empire for all kinds of polite learning. The inhabitants were remarkably superstitious, and so careful that no deity should want due honour, that they had an altar inscribed to the Unknown God. Paul, observing the city wholly given to idolatry, was deeply concerned to see so much devotion misplaced: he therefore disputed with the Jews and proselytes in the synagogues, and with the Athenians and foreigners in the market-place, where they spent their time in nothing else but in telling or hearing some new thing: and he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

Maria. How did they receive it?

Aunt. The philosophers treated him with scorn and contempt, as a setter forth of strange gods. And they took him to Areopagus, or Mars-hill, which was the highest court in the city, and desired him to inform them concerning this new doctrine.

He did not begin with upbraiding them with their idolatries; but, in the most pleasing manner, addressed them as follows:

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for, as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth to all life and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because

cause he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Lucy. Had this speech any good effect on the Athenians ?

Aunt. Some mocked, but others were willing to hear him again ; and some believed, among whom was one of the judges or senators of the court, named Dionysius, and a woman named Damaris. But we have exceeded our time.

R 2

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XXI.

Aunt. **W**E will now resume our history. Paul departed from Athens, and went about fifty or sixty miles south-westward, to Corinth, a city situated upon the narrow Isthmus of Peloponnesus, then the metropolis of all Greece. Here he met with Aquila and his wife Priscilla, lately banished from Rome by the decree against the Jews ; and they being of the same trade of tent-making with himself, he abode with them, and wrought therein. In this city, Paul endured many labours and troubles, but was refreshed by the coming of Silas and Timothy from the church at Thessalonica, with the good tidings of their faith and love.

George. Did any of them preach in this place ?

Aunt. On the sabbath-days Paul taught in the synagogues, and, though he met with so many discouragements from the Jews, he boldly preached to them that Jesus was Christ. This so exasperated them, that they vented their rage in blasphemies ; upon which he declared, that he had cleared his conscience, that their blood would be upon their own heads, and
that

that he would now go unto the gentiles : he then removed his lodgings, and took up his abode with one Justus, a profelyte of the gate, whose house was adjoining to the synagogue. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, belieyed in Jesus with all his house ; and many of the Corinthians believed also. The Lord, to encourage Paul, appeared to him in the night, in a vision, saying, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace ; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee ; for I have much people in this city. Upon this assurance, he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

About this time, Gallio, a person of celebrated virtue and probity (said to have been elder brother to the famous Seneca), was sent to Corinth to be proconsul of Achaia. The unbelieving Jews seized on Paul, and, in a tumultuous manner, carried him to Gallio's tribunal, where they accused him of persuading men to worship God contrary to their law. Paul was about to make his defence, but was prevented by Gallio's thus addressing the Jews ; If it were a matter of wrong or wickedness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you : but if it be a question of words and names, look ye to it ; for I will be no judge in such matters. And he drove them from the judgment-seat : upon which the Greeks

took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat: but Gallio cared for none of those things.

Lucy. At this time Paul's enemies were disappointed in their attempts to injure him.

Aunt. You remember, my dear, that God had warranted his security, by promising that no man should be able to hurt him. Paul continued some considerable time longer at Corinth, where he planted a large church. The whole of his stay in Europe was about two years; and then, taking Aquila and Priscilla, he returned into Asia. Having sailed about one hundred leagues eastward, he landed at the famous city Ephesus, the metropolis of those parts, where he preached a short time in the synagogues, reasoning with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry longer with them, he consented not.

Maria. Why would not he stay?

Aunt. Because he had a desire to keep the approaching feast at Jerusalem; but he promised, if it was the will of God, to return to them again. He left Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus, and, sailing about two hundred leagues south-eastward, landed at Cæsarea, and from thence went to Jerusalem. Having visited the churches, he went down to Antioch in Syria; and, after some little stay there, traversed all the

country of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples.

While Paul was taking this long circuit, the providence of God took care of the churches of Ephesus, by means of Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, who was instructed in the way of the Lord. Being a man of flowing eloquence, and well versed in the scriptures, he entered the synagogues, and spake the word of God with great boldness, knowing only the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla, observing his zeal and sincerity, took him unto them, and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. Apollos, having a desire to pass into Achaia, was recommended by letters from the believers of Ephesus to those of Corinth. In this city he proved serviceable to the church, and watered what Paul had before planted; powerfully convincing the Jews also that Jesus was the true and only Messiah promised in the holy scriptures.

Lucy. Did Paul return to Ephesus?

Aunt. He did; and made a longer stay in this city than in any other, continuing two years among them; having great difficulties to encounter in this place, not only from the Jews, but also from the philosophers, magicians, and other idolaters. Paul preached in the synagogues of the Jews for three months, but finding most of them continue obstinate in
their

their infidelity, he separated from them, and taught in the school of one Tyrannus. God was pleased to honour Paul's preaching by extraordinary miracles ; for, if handkerchiefs or aprons were but touched by him, and applied to the sick or possessed, they were immediately cured.

These miracles, however, had but little effect on the Jews : some of whom thought, that, by using the name of Christ, they could do the same. Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew and chief of the priests, made the attempt, on a man who had an evil spirit, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. The evil spirit answered, Jesus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are ye ? And the man who was possessed leaped on them, and overcame them ; and they fled out of the house naked and wounded.

George. What a disgrace ! but was it publicly known ?

Aunt. Yes, it was, both to Jews and Greeks ; and had this happy effect, to make them reverence and magnify the name of the Lord Jesus. And many believed, and brought their magical books, and burnt them : and when the price of them was counted, they were found to be worth fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Maria.

Maria. How much would that amount to in our money?

Aunt. At the lowest computation, it exceeded fifteen hundred pounds sterling; but, according to some, it was not less than six thousand. A little before Paul's departure from this city, a great tumult took place. The city was renowned for its temple, which contained the image of the goddess Diana. This building, from its magnificent structure, riches, and beauty, was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. Of this temple and its image it was usual for the citizens and travellers to have silver shrines and models, which employed a great number of silversmiths, who were afraid their gains should be lost by the progress of christianity. Demetrius, the chief man in the trade, called together his brethren, and informed them that their craft, by which they gained their wealth, was in danger; for Paul had persuaded, and turned away the people, (not only at Ephesus, but throughout all Asia,) saying, They were no gods which were made with hands: therefore the temple and their goddess would be despised, and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipped. This roused the artists, and they set up a cry of, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians;' so that the whole city was filled with confusion. And they caught Gaius and Aristarchus,

men

men of Macedonia, Paul's companions, and rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Lucy. What a confusion there must be !

Aunt. The greater part knew not wherefore they were come together ; for some cried one thing and some another : till one Alexander attempted to address them, being put forward by the Jews ; but, the moment they perceived that he was a Jew, (knowing the aversion of that people to the worship of idols) they all cried out with one voice, Great is Diana of the Ephesians : and this continued about the space of two hours. At length they were appeased by the town clerk, who appears to have been a wise and prudent man. After remonstrating on the impropriety of their conduct, he informed Demetrius, and the craftsmen who were with him, that if they had any matter against any man, the law was open, and it might be determined in a lawful assembly. He then dismissed the people, telling them that they were in danger of being called to account for that day's uproar.

George. Where was Paul during this disturbance ?

Aunt. He would have entered into the theatre, but was dissuaded by his friends. Shortly after, taking an affectionate leave of them, he departed to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those

those parts, he came into Greece, where he abode three months. He purposed to sail from thence into Syria; but, finding that the Jews lay in wait for him, he altered his plan, and returned through Macedonia. He was accompanied by several of his friends into Asia, whom he sent forward to Troas, ordering them to stay there till he came. After a short stay at Philippi, Paul, with Luke, the companion of his travels, set sail, and reached Troas in five days; where they found their friends waiting for them. In this place they abode seven days.

On the first day of the week all the disciples met together to celebrate the Lord's supper, on which occasion, Paul preached to them. Intending the next day to depart, he continued his exhortations till midnight. A young man, whose name was Eutychus, sitting in a window, went into a deep sleep, and fell down from the third loft; for they were assembled in an upper room; and he was taken up dead.

Maria. This looked like a judgment upon him for sleeping.

Aunt. In many cases, sleeping is the effect of mere sloth, and a careless frame of heart; but the length of Paul's discourse forms an apology for this young man. The miracle God permitted to be wrought in his favour seems also to strengthen the supposition, that

that he sunk beneath the pressure of fatigue, after giving long and close attention. Paul, with the utmost affection, went down and embraced him, saying to those about him, Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him. And they returned to the same apartment, no doubt, full of praises, being not a little comforted that the young man was alive. They did not separate till break of day. We will resume our subject at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XXII.

Aunt. **T**HE next day Paul set out for Assos on foot, probably that he might have an opportunity of meeting with some of the christians by the way. At Assos he met with his companions who had come by sea. They all took shipping, and, after three days sail, arrived at Miletus, about thirty miles south of Ephesus. Paul, purposing to be at Jerusalem, at the feast of pentecost, would not go up to Ephesus, lest that journey should detain him too long, but sent for the elders of the church, that he might give them a farewell exhortation, knowing that he should never see them again. This pathetic address is recorded at length in Acts xx. 17 to the end; which I would recommend to your attentive perusal. He then kneeled down and prayed with them; and they wept much, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship. In a short time they arrived at Tyre; and finding disciples, they staid there seven days. Some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, advised Paul

not to go to Jerusalem; but, when they found he could not be dissuaded from proceeding on his journey, they, with their wives and children, attended him to the shore, where Paul, kneeling down, prayed with them. Then they sailed to Ptolemais, a city of Phœnicia near Galilee, where they abode one day with the brethren. The next day they came to Cæsarea, and lodged at the house of Philip the evangelist. And there came down from Jerusalem a certain prophet, named Agabus; and he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet.

Maria. What could he mean by that?

Aunt. By this striking similitude he represented to Paul the treatment he should meet with at Jerusalem, assuring him that he should be bound, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

George. Did not his friends dissuade him from going?

Aunt. They used the most earnest intreaties. But Paul, with a zeal which all the tears of the tenderest affection were not able to extinguish, nobly replied, What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus. Finding his resolution fixed and immovable, they ceased their importunity, saying, The will of the Lord be done. They then proceeded to Jerusalem, with some disci-
ples

ples from Cæſarea, and one Mnafon of Cyprus, an old diſciple, with whom they were to lodge.

The day after their arrival, Paul had a meeting with James and the elders, to whom he related what great things the Lord had wrought among the Gentiles by his miniſtry, which, when they heard, they glorified God; but adviſed Paul to attend to ſome ceremonial purifications, in order to leſſen the prejudices of the Jews againſt him. Not many days after, when Paul was in the temple for this purpoſe, ſome Jews of Aſia ſtirred up the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, That this was he who taught men every where to forſake the law and the temple. And the people ran together, and took Paul, and drew him out of the temple, and were about to kill him. But Claudius Lyſias, chief captain of the Roman band, which kept garrifon in the caſtle Antonia, being informed of the tumult, came down with his ſoldiers; and when the people ſaw the captain, they left off beating Paul. And the captain took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, enquiring who he was, and what he had done. Some cried one thing, and ſome another, and the tumult was ſo great, that the ſoldiers were obliged to take Paul in their arms, to defend him from the violence of the people. As he was going into the caſtle, he begged leave of the captain to ſpeak to the people, which being granted, Paul ſtood on the

stairs, and making signs for silence, began to address them in Hebrew, which excited their attention and they became more calm. He then gave them an account of his birth and education; his zeal for their religion, and his persecution of the christians; his conversion, and call to preach to the Gentiles. Hitherto they had heard him with patience, but, when he came to defend his preaching to the gentiles, they could contain no longer, but cried out, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live. And the more to express their indignation, they cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air; but the captain ordered him into the castle, and, that he should be examined by scourging, till he had confessed what he had done to make the Jews so outrageous against him.

Lucy. I think that was both a cruel and uncertain method of coming to the truth. Poor Paul! he had before undergone the same punishment at Philippi.

Aunt. At this time he escaped by taking the benefit of the Roman laws; for, while they were binding him, he asked the centurion whether it was lawful to scourge a Roman, and that uncondemned? The centurion immediately informed the captain, who relinquished his design of scourging, being afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, because he had bound him. The next day Paul was loosed from his bands;

and, that the captain might come to a certainty of the accusation brought against him by the Jews, he ordered the sanhedrim to assemble, and brought Paul before them to be examined. Paul, perceiving the council to be composed partly of Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, and partly of Pharisees, who believe it, took advantage of this circumstance, by declaring that it was for the hope of the resurrection of the dead that he was called in question; thus following our Lord's advice, Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This declaration, which was an undoubted truth, immediately produced the desired effect; for the assembly were now as much divided among themselves as before they were unanimous against him. And the contention grew so violent, that Lyfias was constrained to take Paul away by force, and bring him into the castle. At night, to comfort him under his troubles, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for, as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. The Jews, defeated in their designs, grew the more enraged; and forty of them bound themselves under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

George. But Paul was in a place of security, and how did they think to come at him?

Aunt. They went to the sanhedrim, acquainting them

with their design, and begging them to assist in it, by sending to Lyfias the captain, to bring the prisoner down, that they might examine him more perfectly, declaring that before he could reach the council, they would slay him. Paul's sister's son, coming to the knowledge of it, went and informed him of the whole affair.

Maria. But Paul had no occasion to take any notice of it; because he had assurance from God that his life would be preserved.

Aunt. Notwithstanding this, he saw it his indispensable duty to use proper means for the security of that life which God had promised to preserve. And he called one of the centurions, desiring him to take that young man to Lyfias, for he had something to communicate to him. When Lyfias had heard the account, he charged the young man not to tell any one that he had shewn these things to him. The captain immediately ordered two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, to be ready at the third hour of the night, and to provide a horse for Paul, that they might convey him safe to Felix the governor: to whom he wrote a letter, giving him a true state of the case. And the soldiers brought him by night to Antipatris, where they left him with the horsemen, and returned to the castle. And when they came to Cæsarea, they delivered

livered their prisoner and the letter to the governor, which when he had read, he enquired of what province he was. Being informed that he was of Cilicia, he promised Paul a hearing when his accusers came; and, in the mean time, he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

Maria. How long was it before his accusers came down?

Aunt. It was only five days before Ananias the high priest and the elders came, and brought with them a famous orator, named Tertullus. Paul being set before them, Tertullus stood up to accuse him; and, in a flattering speech, first celebrated the worthy actions of Felix, and then proceeded to his accusation of Paul, to which the Jews also assented, saying, That these things were so.

Paul, having leave from Felix to make his defence, began with declaring himself satisfied that he was to plead before one, who, for several years, had been governor of that nation: he then calmly and distinctly answered to the several parts of the charge.

Maria. Did Felix decide against Paul?

Aunt. No: he refused determining on the matter, till Lyfias should come down. He committed Paul to the custody of a centurion, but ordered that none of his friends should be hindered from visiting him. Some time after, Felix, and his wife Drusilla, sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith of Christ.

Paul

Paul enlarged on those virtues, in which the governor was extremely defective, particularly justice and temperance; adding some discourse concerning the judgment to come; which made Felix tremble. And he said to Paul, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will send for thee.

Lucy. Did he send for him afterwards?

Aunt. We do not find that he ever conversed with him again on that subject. After two years Porcius Festus came in Felix' room: and Felix, willing to gratify the Jews, left Paul bound.

Festus, three days after his arrival, went to Jerusalem; when the sanhedrim brought fresh accusations against Paul, begging he might be brought to Jerusalem to be tried, intending to kill him by the way. Festus told them that he was going to Cæsarea; and, if they had any thing against the prisoner, they might go down with him, and accuse him. Festus, being returned, entered on the trial of Paul. The Jews renewed their charges with the utmost violence; but Paul defended himself so well, by manifesting that he had neither offended against the Jewish laws, nor against the temple, nor against the emperor, that their charges failed for want of sufficient proof.

George. Then of course he was acquitted.

Aunt. He ought to have been; but Festus, willing to please the Jews, said unto Paul, Wilt thou go unto

to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Paul answered, I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou well knowest; and no man can deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.

Festus consulted with the council what was to be done: the result was, that as he had appealed to Cæsar, to Cæsar he must go. He was now kept till a convenient opportunity offered to send him to Rome. In the mean time, king Agrippa, with Bernice his sister, came to pay their compliments to the new governor. Festus gave the king some account of his prisoner Paul: for he appears to have been quite perplexed to know what to write to the emperor; therefore he did all in his power to excite the curiosity of the king to see Paul: having obtained his end, he promised, on the morrow the king should examine him, that he might have somewhat to write about, for it appeared unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not to signify the crimes laid to his charge.

The next day, the king and his sister, accompanied by Festus, and other persons of quality, with a large retinue, went into the court of justice, where Paul was brought before them. Festus gave an account of the accusations of the Jews against him, and his appeal to the emperor. Agrippa then told
Paul

Paul that he had liberty to make his own defence, which he did, in a speech that may be considered as a model of eloquence.

He began by expressing his satisfaction, that he was called to speak before one, who was so well acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews. He then gave a brief account of his former profession and manner of life; of his miraculous conversion to christianity, and of his call to preach the gospel to the gentiles; with his subsequent conduct and behaviour. He was proceeding to prove, from the scriptures of the Old Testament, that Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers, when he was suddenly interrupted by Festus, who said, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. To which Paul calmly replied, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. He then appealed to Agrippa, who could not forbear owning the force of what he said, by acknowledging before the whole company to Paul, that he had almost persuaded him to be a christian. Paul answered with a devout wish, that not only Agrippa, but that all who heard him that day were both almost and altogether such as he was, excepting the circumstance of his imprisonment. And when he had thus spoken, the king and his company departed.

Maria.

Maria. But, from what had been said, what had Festus to write about?

Aunt. Festus could not gain any thing from this examination: for the king gave it as his opinion that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds; and that, if he had not appealed to Cæsar, he might have been set at liberty.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XXIII.

Aunt. **W**E are now entering on Paul's voyage to Rome. He was delivered, with some other prisoners to Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band; and, entering a ship, sailed by the coasts of Asia. Having proceeded about twenty-five leagues northward, they cast anchor at Sidon.

Maria. Did they stay long there?

Aunt. No; but Julius favoured Paul, so far as to give him liberty to go on shore to visit his friends, and refresh himself. From thence they sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. At length they came to Myra, a city of Lycia, where the centurion found a ship bound for Italy, in which they sailed slowly for many days, the winds still continuing contrary. And when they were come to a place, called the Fair Haven, nigh unto the city Lasea, sailing being now dangerous, Paul advised them not to proceed on their voyage; for, if they did, it would be to the damage and hurt, not only of the ship and lading, but also of their lives: but the master of the ship paid no regard to this admonition, and

and the haven, notwithstanding its fine name, not being commodious to winter in, they all concluded to proceed, if possible, to Phenice, and there to winter.

George. The centurion however had no need to have gone.

Aunt. But he put more confidence in the master of the ship than in Paul: and, a gentle gale arising from the south, they thought they had obtained their purpose, and immediately set sail. But shortly after, there arose a tempestuous wind, which was so furious, that the seamen were compelled to let the ship drive before it; and it ran under a certain small island, called Claudia, where, with much difficulty, they saved the boat; then, undergirding the ship, to secure it from splitting, and fearing lest they should fall on quicksands, they struck sail, and were again driven, being violently tossed by the tempest. The next day they lightened the ship by casting the goods over-board; on the third day, the tackle and furniture of the ship shared the same fate. And when neither sun nor stars had appeared for many days, the tempest still continuing, the seamen lost all hope of being saved.

Lucy. They had reason now to wish they had attended to Paul's advice.

Aunt. Paul reminded them of it; but, at the same

time, comforted them with an assurance, that though the ship would be wrecked on a certain island, yet no one's life should be lost; for God had sent an angel to inform him, that, notwithstanding the present danger, he should be brought before the emperor; and that, for his sake, not one in the ship should be lost. And Paul exhorted them to be of good cheer, for he believed God, that it should be as he had told him.

On the fourteenth night, the shipmen, about midnight, deemed that they were near some country, and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and, when they had gone a little farther, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms: then, fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors, and wished for the day: but Paul, perceiving that the shipmen were about to desert the ship by taking to the boat under pretence of casting anchors out of the foreship, said to the centurion and soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

George. How did the soldiers oblige them to remain on board?

Aunt. They cut the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. Paul then exhorted them to take some refreshment for their health's sake, assuring them that no hurt should come to them. And he took bread and gave thanks to God, in the presence of them all. And they were comforted, and took some meat.

George.

George. How many were in the ship?

Aunt. Two hundred and seventy-six persons. And, when it was day, they knew not the land; but, discerning a creek, with a kind of haven, into which they wished to thrust the ship, they took up the anchor, loosened the rudder bands, and, hoisting up the main sail to the wind, made towards the land: but, unexpectedly falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the fore-part stuck fast, and remained immoveable; but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. The soldiers' counsel, in this extremity, was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should make their escape; but the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they who could swim should cast themselves into the sea, and get to land.

Maria. But how did they escape who could not swim?

Aunt. Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship: so they all got safe to land.

George. What place had they got to?

Aunt. An island, as Paul had foretold, then called Melita, but now Malta; the inhabitants of which were descendants of the Carthaginians, but subject to the Romans. They shewed great kindness to these distressed strangers, making them a fire to warm them,

and dry their clothes. As Paul was laying some sticks on the fire, a viper fastened on his hand. When the barbarians saw this, they supposed him to have been a murderer, and that, though he had escaped the sea, yet vengeance followed him; but he shook off the beast into the fire, the people still gazing on him, expecting him to fall down dead: but when they saw no harm follow, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

Maria. Why were these people called Barbarians?

Aunt. This term, as used by the ancients, has no respect to cruelty of character, but to inferiority of manners, being generally applied by the Greeks and Romans, to almost all nations whose language and customs differed from theirs.

The shipwreck of Paul and his companions being made known to Publius, the chief man of the island; from compassion to their misfortunes, he lodged and entertained them three days, with all civility. Paul amply rewarded the hospitality of this great man.

Maria. How? for he had nothing to give him.

Aunt. By the miraculous cure of his father, who lay sick of a fever. Paul prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. This encouraged others to bring their diseased to him, who were also healed.

And

And the people loaded them with honours; and afterwards furnished them with provisions and conveniences for the rest of the voyage.

After three months they left the place, and set sail for Rome, in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle. They next put in at Syracuse, a famous city of Sicily, where they tarried three days: from thence sailing to Rhegium, a port and city of Calabria in Italy: and from thence, in two days, they arrived at Puteoli, a port of Campania in Italy, near Naples, where the ships of Alexandria were usually unladen. Here Paul, meeting some christians, at their request, staid a week with them, and then proceeded on his journey to Rome by land.

Lucy. How many miles might he have to travel?

Aunt. About one hundred. The christians at Rome, hearing that the apostle Paul was coming to that city, went out to meet him: some as far as Appii forum, fifty-one miles, and others as far as the Three Taverns, a place so called, thirty-three miles from Rome. And when Paul saw them, he blessed God, and took courage.

Arriving at Rome, Julius delivered his prisoners to the commander of the emperor's guards, (whose name, as ecclesiastical history informs us, was Barrhus, a man of good disposition and reputation) who permitted

mitted Paul to dwell by himself in his own hired house, with only one soldier to guard him. After three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together, telling them why he was constrained to appeal to Cæsar ; and assuring them, that it was for the hope of Israel he was bound with that chain. They appointed a day to hear him concerning the christian faith : and when they were come, he expounded and testified the kingdom of God ; persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

Maria. What success had this discourse ?

Aunt. Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. Paul concluded with telling them, that the salvation of God was sent to the gentiles, and that they would hear it. When he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasonings among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, receiving all that came unto him, teaching them those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Lucy. But, as a prisoner, his labours must be so confined, that comparatively he could do but little good.

Aunt. Paul's imprisonment tended very much to promote

promote the propagation of the gospel, and made him famous in the emperor Nero's court, where he was the instrument of converting many to christianity. Many of the brethren, by his success, grew bolder, and preached the word without fear, as you may find by reading Phil. i. 12—14.

We have now gone through the historical part of the scriptures. The epistles are written either to particular churches or persons ; but do not therefore conclude that you have no concern in them. As God appointed the earth to produce corn for bread, from one generation to another ; and, as our bodies are nourished with the same kind of provision as our forefathers' were ; so God hath appointed the whole of his blessed word to be the bread of life to our souls ; it being as exactly suited to our wants as it was to theirs to whom it was originally addressed. The Revelations of St. John chiefly consist of predictions, some of which have been accomplished : and the time is hastening on, in which all the prophecies in the bible shall have their complete fulfilment.

I hope, my dear children, the conversations we have had on the Sacred History will be profitable to you. I have been pleased with the attention you have given, and the delight you have expressed in them. We have taken but a scanty survey of the divine records ; there are ten thousand beauties which we have

passed over : then, search the scriptures ; and be not discouraged, if you do not understand all you read : remember the disciples could not comprehend our Lord's instructions, till he opened their understanding. When you take the sacred volume into your hand, put up this short prayer, ' Lord, enlighten thou mine understanding.'

George. Pray, aunt, did not most of the apostles die martyrs ? could you not give us some account of them ?

Aunt. As I love to encourage a spirit of enquiry, I will endeavour to collect the best account I can from Ecclesiastical History ; and, if you will come again in a week's time, I hope to be prepared for you.

Lucy, Maria, and George. Thanks to you, dear aunt, we will not fail in our attendance.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XXIV.

Aunt. **A** GREEABLE to promise, I am now to give you some further account of the apostles, from Ecclesiastical History. In describing the last scenes of their lives, I shall not aim, my dear children, to rouse your feelings; all I want is to affect your hearts; to make you sensible of the power of divine grace, which can support under the most cruel sufferings, and make feeble men more than conquerors over death itself.

Lucy. I know we shall feel shocked at their sufferings, but we must recollect that all is over now, and they are rejoicing in heaven.

Aunt. That is bringing your feelings into subjection to your understanding. I shall follow the order of time as nearly as I can. You have had an account of the martyrdom of James by king Herod; we will proceed to Philip, whose death some authors place in the twelfth year of the emperor Claudius.

After a happy progress, in spreading the gospel in upper Asia, part of Scythia, and Colchis, he is said to have suffered martyrdom in Hierapolis, a noted city

city of Phrygia in the lesser Asia. His preaching being powerful, and many of the people of the city being converted, the magistrates cast him into prison, and caused him to be severely scourged, and then hanged by the neck against a pillar. Others say, he was crucified. The apostle Bartholomew buried him.

Maria. It is a wonder he was not seized.

Aunt. It was with great difficulty he escaped.

St. Matthew, after innumerable labours in Ethiopia, Persia, and Parthia, is said to have suffered martyrdom in the city Naddaber, in the Asiatic Ethiopia, being slain with a halbert; but the time, manner, and place of his death are very uncertain; some place it in the year 60, and the sixth of Nero's reign. About two years after, the apostle James, the son of Alphaeus, sealed his doctrine with his blood. His labours being chiefly confined to Jerusalem. He was of such a lovely temper and pious life, that he was universally styled James the Just. The Jews turned their fury against him, in consequence of having been disappointed in their designs against Paul, who had appealed to Cæsar. They effected their purpose by means of Ananias the high priest, who called a council of the chief men of the Jews. James and several others were brought before them; but the people had such a veneration for the justice and sanctity

sanctity of James, that they dared not attempt a formal accusation of him.

George. Did they slay him privately?

Aunt. No; they thought by subtle insinuations to ensnare him; therefore, complaining to him, that the people were miserably deceived, and led away with some errors, concerning Jesus being the Messiah, they earnestly desired him to recover them from their errors by his word. It was now the time of the passover, and the multitude were collected together to the feast. They took him to the battlements of the temple, and, placing him so that all the people might hear him, said unto him, Tell us, O just man, in whom we all put our confidence, what we are to believe concerning Jesus, who was crucified?

Lucy. Did they think to intimidate him, so that he should deny his master?

Aunt. I suppose that was what they aimed at; but instead of denying his dear Lord, he proclaimed with a loud voice, That Jesus, the Son of man, after whom they enquired, was now sitting at the right-hand of the divine Majesty, as the Son of God, and should come again in the clouds of heaven. The people below, hearing this, glorified the blessed Jesus, and openly proclaimed, Hosanna to the son of David; at which his enemies were so mortified, that, in their
3074 rage,

age, they threw him down from the place where he stood. Though much bruised by the fall, he was not killed, but recovered strength enough to get on his knees, and pray to Heaven for their pardon.

Lucy. Did not this soften them? one should think it would have melted a heart of stone!

Aunt. Their inveterate malice urged them on, to load his already bruised body with a shower of stones, till one more mercifully cruel than the rest, with a fuller's club, beat out his brains. His death was much lamented by the christians, who loved and revered him: even just persons among the Jews themselves regretted his loss: and Josephus confesses, that his death hastened the ruin of his nation. We are told by some, that Ananias the high priest apprehended the apostle Matthias in Galilee, and had him brought before him, making a long speech to him: but, finding his exhortations had no effect, and that Matthias still asserted Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, he condemned him to be stoned; and the sentence was immediately executed. But, for this or any other account of Matthias' death, we have very slender authorities.

Lucy. We have not yet heard that the Roman power persecuted the christians.

Aunt. They did not, till the year 64: when the emperor Nero, who was a monster in human shape, being

being offended at the narrowness of the streets of Rome, caused the city to be set on fire in several places, whilst he, standing on a tower, beheld the desolation with pleasure, and, in a player's habit, sung the destruction of Troy. The fire continued six days, consuming stately buildings and temples, goods and merchandize, and riches of inestimable value; numbers of people also perished, and three-fourths of this vast city were laid in ashes.

George. It was enough to make the people hate him!

Aunt. To divert their resentment from himself, he threw all the blame upon the innocent christians, and proceeded against them with the utmost fury, as if they had been the authors of this calamity. Nero was the first who drew the imperial sword against the christians, and this is properly called, the first general persecution.

Lucy. Then whither could they flee for safety?

Aunt. Scarcely any where; for the persecution extended to the provinces; but the violence of the storm fell on those at Rome. I forbear giving you a detail of the cruel deaths endured by the christians, who suffered in multitudes: yet were their afflictions light and transitory, compared with that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, to which they were the means of introducing them. It is conjectured by

some, that the apostle Andrew fell a victim this year in the province of Achaia. Having preached the gospel, and wrought miracles in the wild northern countries of Scythia and Sogdiana, and afterwards, in the provinces of lesser Asia, he at length came to Greece, Epirus, and Achaia, where he added more converts to the christian faith; which excited the resentment of the proconsul of the province, who condemned him to be crucified. It is supposed he suffered in the city Patrae in Achaia.

Maria. How long did this persecution last?

Aunt. The fury of it did not last long; but, throughout Nero's reign, the christians were in less safety than formerly.

George. Pray what became of Paul, who was a prisoner at Rome?

Aunt. After two years confinement, he was released, and, during these times of persecution, continued the course of his ministry from place to place, pressing on through toils and difficulties, or, as he himself expresses it, 'In deaths often;' yet no danger could draw him from his beloved work of winning souls to Christ.

About the year 67, Paul returned to Rome, where, meeting with Peter, they both used their utmost endeavours to convert the Jews and Gentiles. Helius, being made governor of the city in the absence

fence of Nero who was gone into Greece, seized on the two apostles, and put them in prison, where they were kept in close confinement for eight or nine months.

Maria. Did not this put a stop to their usefulness?

Aunt. No; God can turn a prison into a church.

Lucy. But how could they find persons enough to constitute one?

Aunt. Our Lord has said, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them; and where Christ is, there is his church. They preached to their guards and fellow-prisoners: and, it is reported, were the means of converting the captain of the guards, and forty-seven others: perhaps this might hasten Paul's summons to appear before the governor Helius; though all men forsook him, on this trying occasion, yet the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him. Alexander the copper-smith, who is said to have been excommunicated by the apostle not long before, now turned all his malice against him, and did him much injury: also the disciples of Asia, of whom were Phygellus and Hermogenes, who attended him to Rome, turned away from him.

Lucy. How this must grieve the apostle!

Aunt. Undoubtedly it did. But it pleased the

Lord to mitigate his distress, by raising up one, whose character and conduct formed a pleasing contrast to those mentioned above; for the apostle testifies of him, that when he was at Rome, he sought him out very diligently, and administered to him, not being ashamed of his chain.

Maria. What was the name of this excellent man?

Aunt. Onesiphorus; as you will find by consulting Paul's second epistle to Timothy, which appears to have been written not long before his death. He seems, in that epistle, earnestly to desire Timothy to come unto him, as he had none of his old companions with him but Luke; Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world; and others, he names, as having gone to attend on their ministry in different places. He saw that the time of his departure was at hand; and he did not shrink from it, but said, I am now ready to be offered up: I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Lucy. In such a happy frame of mind, the terrors of

of the most dreadful death must be abated, by looking forward to that crown which shall be given to them that hold out to the end.

Aunt. And especially when they can say, as this same apostle does, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the beginning of the year 68, disturbances broke out at Rome, and, at the request of Helius, Nero left Greece, though in the midst of winter: but, before his arrival at Rome, the apostles Peter and Paul had suffered martyrdom; the former, as a Jew and foreigner, was condemned to be crucified, and the latter, as a Roman, to be beheaded. Peter, having been scourged, according to the Roman custom, was led to the top of the Vatican Mount, near Tyber, where, it is said, he intreated, and obtained, the favour that he might not be crucified in the ordinary way, but with his head downward, declaring that he was unworthy to die in the same posture in which his Lord and Master had suffered before him. The apostle Paul was beheaded three miles out of the city, in a place called Aqua Salvæ, on the same day, being the 22d of February, according to bishop Pearson's calculation. Thus did these two

apostles enter into the joy of their Lord, after indefatigable labours in his vineyard.

George. Pray, aunt, how many apostles were left at the time of their deaths?

Aunt. Five; Jude, Bartholomew, Thomas, Simon, and John; but the account of them we must leave to another opportunity.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XXV.

Aunt. **T**HE time and manner of the apostle Jude's death is very uncertain; several writers place it in the year 72. He is said to have propagated the gospel in Syria and Mesopotamia, generally working as a husbandman; afterwards, travelling into Persia, and meeting with great success in the conversion of souls, he went on boldly, and openly reprov'd the superstitious rites and usages of the Magi, which caused him to be cruelly put to death. Other authors say he was shot to death with arrows, and others that he died in peace at Berytus in Phœnicia. Nor have we greater certainty of the death of the apostle Bartholomew, which is by some placed in the same year. This apostle, after he had preached with great success in Arabia Felix, is said to have removed into Lycaonia, and last of all to Albanople, a city upon the Caspian sea, miserably overrun with idolatry. But, upon his endeavouring to reclaim the people, he was, by the governor of the place, commanded to be crucified, which punishment he cheerfully underwent, comforting and confirming the gentile converts to the last minute of his life. Some add, that

that he was crucified with his head downward; others, that he was flayed alive.

Lucy. How barbarous and inhuman!

Aunt. Yet it was a punishment much in use in the eastern countries. The time of the apostle Thomas's death is equally uncertain; some place it in the year 73. The tradition of the church in Origen's days, says that Parthia was allotted to him, which then contained all Persia. Chrysostom affirms, that he went through almost all parts of the world, and lived without fear in the midst of the most barbarous nations, performing his duty without regard to his own security or life. And, being encouraged by a divine vision, he travelled into the Indies, to Maliapur and the country of the Brachmans, who, fearing the downfall of their rites and religion, resolved upon his death. Accordingly, at a tomb not far from the city, where the apostle often retired for his devotions, while he was intent in prayer, they loaded him with stones and darts, till one of them, coming nearer, ran him through with a lance. From this first plantation of christianity in the East Indies by this apostle, there is said to have been a continued succession of christians in those parts to this day, called by the name of St. Thomas's christians.

Maria. Who was the next sufferer?

Aunt.

Aunt. The apostle Simon. He is said by some to have suffered martyrdom in Britain.

George. What, in our island?

Aunt. Our forefathers were no better than the most savage nations, till the gospel reached this then miserable but now happy isle. Simon is said to have preached in Africa also. He likewise went into Lybia and Mauritania, where he displayed the glory of Jesus Christ, not only by his preaching, but also by miracles: from these countries he came into Britain, where, having been the instrument of converting multitudes to the faith, he was, after much persecution, crucified by the infidels. Others give a different account of his death: so that we have no certainty of the time or manner of it.

Lucy. How is it, aunt, that we have not a full account of the lives and deaths of all the apostles in the scriptures, some being only mentioned by name, while we have so large an account of Paul and Peter? Were not these two apostles more highly favoured than the others?

Aunt. We have no reason, my dear, to form such a conclusion; for the apostle John was as highly favoured in the Revelations which were given to him. With respect to those apostles who have not left any writings behind them, we are not to imagine that the actions of their lives are lost; no, they are all

all faithfully recorded in the Lamb's book of life: for, when they rest from their labours, their works do follow them; and will hereafter compose a register infinitely more authentic and valuable than all the collections of antiquity. They who are made wise unto salvation have indeed a noble library prepared for them in heaven. How many precious sayings fell from the lips of our blessed Jesus, which are not set down in the gospels: for the apostle John tells us, that if every thing had been recorded, he supposes, even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written: but there we shall have the whole complete; affording an inexhaustible source of instruction and delight, throughout the boundless ages of eternity. But, to proceed:

There now only remains John, the beloved disciple of our Lord. We have no particular account of him, till the second general persecution under the emperor Domitian, in the year 95.

George. He must be a very old man.

Aunt. He was then ninety years of age: but that did not exempt him from persecution; for the enemies of christianity accused him to Domitian, as a disturber of the peace of the empire. He accordingly wrote to the proconsul of Asia, to send John bound

to Rome. On his arrival, according to Tertullian, the emperor commanded him to be put into a caldron of boiling oil, or rather oil set on fire; and this, as others assure us, in the presence of the senate.

Lucy. What inventions of cruelty! and, to behold the horrid sight, what wretches!

Aunt. But the Lord shewed them that the power of life and death was not in their hands. The oil burned, but John felt no harm from it: on the contrary, he came out (as Jerom says) more active and vigorous than before.

Maria. Then he had the honour of martyrdom without suffering its torments.

George. Like the three children in the fiery furnace. But did the emperor raise him to high honours, as Nebuchadnezzar did them?

Aunt. The emperor, being disappointed in his intentions, hardened himself against the evidence of the miracle. When he found it was in vain to attempt his life, he banished him to the desolate isle of Patmos, in the Ægean sea, there to be employed in digging in the mines: the usual labour of persons banished thither for any crime.

Maria. How was it, that God should suffer him to pass his life in a desolate island, where he could be of no use to others, nor enjoy any comfort himself?

Aunt.

Aunt. A christian can be in no situation, where the God of comforts cannot make up all losses to him. Here John might indeed say, as Jacob once did, Surely this is the house of God, and the very gate of heaven! Here he had glorious views of the unseen world: nor was his usefulness to others less promoted during his continuance here than his own personal comfort: for, it was in this place he was favoured with those important discoveries of the mind and will of God, recorded in the book of the Revelations; the prophecies of which, in their daily accomplishment, are admirably calculated to establish the faith of believers to the latest period of time, whilst they leave infidels without excuse. The first part consists of admonition and instruction as well as prophecy, being directed to the seven churches in Asia, which this apostle had principally founded, namely, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

George. Did he end his life in this island?

Aunt. It should seem not; for, in Rev. x. 11. you will find that God informed him, he must prophesy again, before many people and nations, and tongues and kings: though some understand this of those prophetic declarations which are contained in the following part of the book, by which he being dead

I

yet

yet speaketh. It appears, however, from Ecclesiastical History, that his enlargement took place shortly after, in the reign of the emperor Nerva, who granted indulgence and toleration to the christians.

The apostle John took advantage of the times, and returned to his most intimate friends at Ephesus. Timothy being dead, he was desired to take the charge of the church, which he accepted; and, notwithstanding his great age, he went many journies into the neighbouring provinces.

The church of God enjoyed rest but four years, when the third general persecution broke out in the year 100, and the third of Trajan: the apostle John however felt none of this storm at Ephesus, but pursued his ministry in peace, though extremely weak and declining in body; continually urging his auditors to the duties of love and tenderness to each other.

Jerom tells us, that from his great age he was reduced to such weakness, that he could not go to the christian assembly, unless carried by his friends, and that, not being able to make long discourses, he would only say to them, 'My dear children, love one another.' Those who attended, being tired with hearing the same thing so often repeated, said to him, Master, why do you always say the same thing? To which he replied, It is what our Lord himself has commanded; and, if ye perform this, ye do well. In the

latter end of the year 100, and the 27th day of December, according to the most received opinion, this great apostle died in peace at Ephesus, being about one hundred years of age.

Thus ended the apostolical age, and likewise the first century. You have seen, my dear children, our Lord's command to his disciples executed, Go and preach to all nations. In less than seventy years christianity had spread through the greatest part of the known world; and that, not by the aid of the civil power; for the Roman emperors endeavoured, with fire and sword, and all that was terrible, to extirpate it: the philosophers used all their arguments, and the orators all their rhetorick and eloquence against it; whilst the world at large loaded it with lies and calumnies; yet no arts could diminish its growth, or stop its progress: amidst all these oppositions it daily increased, which is a demonstration of its divine original; nothing short of Omnipotence itself could maintain and preserve it under such furious storms and conflicts.

Lucy. But at John's death the church had lost all its supporters, and that, in the time of a general persecution.

Aunt. There were many eminent disciples left; among the chief of whom were Ignatius and Polycarp;

carp; for the promise of God cannot fail, in which he says, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world; and though the church has continued to struggle through various difficulties in every period of time, as you may see by consulting Ecclesiastical History, we are assured by prophecy, that the period will come, in which every knee shall bow to Christ, and the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

Lucy. But you promised, madam, to give us the history of the Jews, from the time of Nehemiah to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Aunt. And I shall certainly perform my promise.

George. I am sorry I am going to school, as I wanted very much to hear it.

Aunt. You shall be no loser, George, by attending school. I will write the history in letters, and send you one every month till the whole is completed.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.